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ABSTRACT

Paulo Freire is a Brazilian educator whose theories link educational processes with revolutionary political aims. This report describes attempts by predominantly Latino proponents of his theories to develop "liberating education" (educacion liberadora) in the United States and in Puerto Rico. Section 1 describes the national, political, and religious context in which Freire developed his theories. Section 2 analyzes the ways in which his philosophy has been romanticized by radicals in the United States to justify Third World revolutionary tactics. Section 3 describes efforts by liberating educators to utilize Freire's theories against racism and exploitation, and discusses Alvin Gouldner's theory of the emerging "cultural bourgeoisie." Section 4 summarizes activities of liberating education practitioners in the United States from 1978-83, including a federally funded project to start an Information and Resources Center for Educacion Liberadora (IRCEL). Section 5 is an account of specific problems encountered by these practitioners, and of the theories of two non-Latino proponents of "liberating education." Section 6 addresses the problem of evaluations required by funding sources and their relationship to ontology and epistemology. The impact of the "new physics" and the transformational movement on proponents of Freire's theories is also considered. Section 7 describes Freire's attempts to develop a literacy campaign in Guinea-Bissau. Finally, section 8 summarizes the content of the report and concludes that it may not be possible to apply Freire's philosophy of the principles of liberating education. A bibliography is attached, and notes follow each chapter. (CJM)

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ISSUES FOR AN EVALUATION OF FREIRE-INSPIRED PROGRAMS IN THE UNITED STATES AND PUERTO RICO

by

Blanca Facundo
Río Piedras, Puerto Rico

February, 1984

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PREFACE

This essay is an effort to conceptualize the problems faced when trying to use the ideas of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire in the context of the society of the United States of America.

Its author, Blanca Facundo, was born in Puerto Rico of working-class parents who "progressed" as their society embraced dependent capitalist development between 1947-1964. "Educated" in the island's State university, Facundo began to search for herself an answer to her dissatisfaction with her society. In the process, she attempted to become a junior college teacher in the late 1960's, but found the state of the art in Puerto Rico wanting. It was at this point that she discovered the Spanish translations of Paulo Freire's works.

After thoroughly immersing herself in Freire's works, she moved to the United States and created a disparate network of projects which were attempting to apply Freire's theories. After a decade of such efforts, she now attempts in this essay to understand the meaning and objectives of the theory she embraced, as a means for evaluating the processes and outcomes of the programs in which she participated. Acting critically, she endeavors to reflect upon the actions of a distinct group of Freire followers in the United States.

This essay is a testimony, a testimony of being present at the begining of the future.

Juan M. García-Passalacqua
Ana G. Méndez Educational Foundation
January 30, 1984

"It is intrinsic, then, to the critique practiced here to reject an account of history that is essentially polyanna-like, and to help persons bear bad news concerning their most cherished projects, neither overestimating their own chances nor underestimating the prospects of their adversaries. The critique I practice is stripped of the myth of inevitable progress. It does not believe that the evil are destined to lose power, that the good are fated to win it, or that we will inevitably surpass our ancestors (...) the rules that I obey here call upon me to attend to specially and to bring out those sides of a matter that the participants themselves might prefer to avoid. The rule I follow says that, if there is something systematically silenced in an area of discussion, it is the analyst's responsibility to bring it into focus. In this analytic, then, it is a critical theorist's special task to speak the bad news."

Alvin W. Gouldner, The Two Marxisms.

INTRODUCTION

Anything I may say here was better said by Alvin Gouldner in the quote I have presented in the previous page. However, I cannot consider this essay to be either a 'critique' of Freire's theory, or of Freire-inspired programs in the United States, in the manner in which Gouldner undertook a critique of Marxism. This is so because I am writing about a theory I adopted with a great deal of enthusiasm in 1969 and with which I have tried to act, as an educator, since.

I have used Gouldner's approach to a theory. I am aware that I am writing about five elements: a theory, the theoretician, his practice and that of those of us who adopted the theory, including myself. All five elements are still evolving. 'Capturing' them with the written word is a task that to this day I don't know how I have dared to attempt.

The why (as all why's) seems a simple matter: It had to be done by someone, it is provided-for in the theory itself, it is a requirement of a funding agency, and so on. The how-to (as all how-to's in our practice) is easier said than done. Thus I summarize the process at the end of the essay.

I consider this essay to be a very tentative first step toward our self-understanding. I pose many questions and leave them unanswered. I open up many themes that remain open at the end of the essay. This is a direct reflection of my practice as an educator: I believe that the most important questions are those that resist a simple, factual, individual answer.

It has been pointed to me that the focus of this essay is the relationship between theory and practice and the role of evaluation in connecting/investigating that relationship. Perhaps it is. My intent has been to raise and discuss issues that, from my perspective, are key for an evaluation of Freire-inspired programs in the United States, but which are seldom examined by practitioners.

Blanca Facundo
February 20, 1984.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Many of the bibliographic sources used in this essay were not available in the English language. I have translated into English all quotes taken from these sources. I have also tried to use non-sexist language, but I have not changed the language used by other authors when quoting them.

The notes at the end of each section are used for several purposes. In some cases I expand upon the information provided in the essay; in others I reflect upon statements made in earlier years and which as of 1984, I find unclear and/or inaccurate. In some I offer information on how to get a hold of a resource that may be of special interest to the reader, but difficult to find in the United States.

A dialogue on the contents of this essay is more than welcome. Write to: Alternativas, P.O. Box 424, Señorial Mail Station, Río Piedras, Puerto Rico 00926.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is impossible to name all the persons who, over the years, have shared with me ideas, practices and concerns about the issues I raise in this essay. In more ways than one, I am grateful to everyone who, at one time or another, shared in the work of the IRCEL and ALTERNATIVAS' networks, and who helped to construct a document file on the use of Freire's ideas in the United States and Puerto Rico, between 1980-1983.

At the international level, I must acknowledge the assistance of Vanilda Pereira Paiva (Brazil), Linda Harassim (Canada) and Birgit Wingenroth (West Germany). They all provided me with copies of their recent research products on Paulo Freire, his work and his writings. In the United States and Puerto Rico the following helped out in a last-minute search for further documentation: Renate Taylor (Reston, Va.), América Facundo-Santiago (Dallas), Marilyn Frankestein (Boston), and Samuel Silva-Gotay (San Juan). Readers of the manuscript who provided strong and valuable criticism include Eva Díaz, Juan M. García-Passalacqua and América Facundo-Rosado.

For special dialogues on difficult subjects I am glad to be able to name Dino Pacio Lindín and Bienvenida Rodríguez (New York City), Barry Alpher (New Jersey), Caridad Inda and Chris Zachariadis (Washington, D.C.), and Magaly Rodríguez Mossman in Minneapolis. For typing and editorial assistance with the final format of this essay I am indebted to Zayda Sánchez.

As a working single mother I cannot leave out the patience and support provided by my parents and my children in the difficult months during which I struggled to understand, to write and re-write about issues that provoke tension, anxiety and confusion.

I accept full responsibility for any error or misinterpretation that the reader may find in this essay.

Section 1

WHO IS PAULO FREIRE?

There is no detailed biography of Paulo Freire. The most complete account has been written by Robert Mackie.[1] Mackie's book has helped clarify some aspects of Freire's life, as well as aspects in the development of his ideas. But this work is only the beginning. Bits and pieces of Freire's life can be obtained through the many personal anecdotes with which Freire illustrates his points of view in the seminars and conferences to which he is invited each year. Brief autobiographical notes appear in a booklet entitled Concientización, published in Colombia.[2] Let us briefly review what is known about Paulo Freire up to his first visit to the United States.[3]

Freire was born of a middle-class family in northeastern Brazil —the city of Recife, capital of the state of Pernambuco—in 1921. His father was an officer in the military police of the state of Pernambuco. Freire describes his father as a Spiritist that was not religiously affiliated, and who taught him to respect the opinions of others by respecting the religion of Freire's mother, who was a Catholic. Paulo opted to adopt his mother's religion, a decision also respected by his father. As will be demonstrated further on, Catholicism has been a very strong force in the development of Freire's thought to this day.

Freire has stated that he was already literate when he entered primary school, and that he did his first school years in a private school.[4] The economic depression of 1929 struck the Freire family. Freire was ten years old when he knew hunger for the first time. Still, he "shared the hunger but not the class" with the oppressed: there was a German piano at home and a necktie was considered a part of a man's proper attire. At some point, Freire faced academic problems and had trouble in being admitted to secondary school: his father had died, and as stated by Freire[5]

> I could not understand the lessons of primary school. I got zero. I cried, I suffered. I was hungry and feeling guilty. [Because of his bad grades.]

By 1939, the economic situation of his family had improved, as Freire's elder brothers were working. Freire was 18 years old. "I began to eat more," says Freire, "and then I began to understand everything."[6] His academic record improved.

By 1941 a twenty year old Freire was a secondary schoolteacher of Portuguese and a university student at a law school. He had also initiated independent studies in philosophy and the psychology of language. Three years later, with "an irresistible vocation to become a father," he married Elsa Maia Costa Oliveira, a Catholic elementary schoolteacher and later on a school director. Elsa is still his wife and the couple has five children. Freire has stated that it was "precisely after my marriage when I started to have a systematic interest in educational problems."[7]

By his own account, he was a "mediocre" law student, perhaps because he was more interested in the philosophical and sociological foundations of education than in the law. Nonetheless, he obtained a degree in Law and tried to practice his profession. His first case, he says, had to do with an indebted young dentist. After a conversation with this person, Freire states that he left the profession.[8] Another source places Freire working "for some years as a labor union lawyer."[9]

There is no chronology of Freire's career development in Brazil. Dates for the positions he held are, for the most part, not available. Freire has written that he worked at SESI, an agency he describes as belonging to the welfare type.[10] Freire directed SESI's Department of Education and Culture. Later on he was a Superintendent at this agency (1946-54). Freire says that it is from this period on that he had the experiences that would result in his now famous literacy method.[11]

Early in the forties, he and Elsa became involved in the Catholic Action Movement.[12] In 1959, Freire submitted a doctoral dissertation to the University of Recife on the subject Educaçao e atualidade brasileira (which roughly translates into "Education and the Present Moment in Brazil").[13] Mackie says that "not long after, the university appointed [Freire] to a chair in the history and philosophy of education."[14] In 1960 Freire founded Recife's Popular Culture Movement, which later on was transferred to the Cultural Extension Service of the University of Recife.[15] It seems safe to conclude that Freire's career development in Brazil was one of upward mobility, as an educated member of the middle class.

I think it would be helpful to turn our attention to the development of Brazil during the first four decades of Freire's life, prior to his exile in 1964. Miguel Arraes, who was Mayor of Recife and later on Governor of Pernambuco, and the person said to have been the first who sponsored Freire's experiments with his literacy method,[16] categorizes the modern economic development of Brazil into two major periods: (1) 1930-1945 and (2) 1945-1964.[17]

The first period (1930-1945), which encompasses ages 9-24 in the life of Freire, saw Brazil's incorporation into modern times. Foreign capital investments were in retreat due to the crisis of 1929 and, later on, to World War II. The developing national industrial burgeoisie faced little foreign competition. An urban workforce had been growing, both in the industry and in the public and private service occupations during the first three decades of the century. A policy of conciliation between the national burgeoisie and the workforce was deliberately adopted and implemented by a paternalistic government. The rural areas were relatively quiet.[18] Illiterates could not vote, and about 90% of the peasants was illiterate. Mass organizations and movements were limited to urban areas.

The second period, 1945-1964, was characterized by a massive penetration of foreign capital and the ultimate defeat of the national industrial burgeoisie which emerged in Brazil during the former period. In Arraes' explanation, the core of the process was a struggle between imperialism and a national capitalism that over the fifties had a more or less liberal and populist outlook.[19] The overt political struggle took the form of broad political Fronts which included workers, industrialists, liberals and Communists. The banners were nationalism and the construction of an anti-imperialist (though capitalist) national economy.[20] The fifties were a period of rapid social, economic and political evolution. The mostly rural northeast evidenced a considerable unrest, an example of which was the formation of Peasant Leagues which demanded land for those who tilled it.[21] The Church became involved in the organization of rural syndicates. Political (electoral) victories blinded reformists to the reality of foreign penetration and control of the Brazilian economy. Amidst a vociferous nationalistic rhetoric, foreign capital was defeating the national industry.[22] Freire was in his mid-thirties.

It is important to understand that progressive forces in Brazil during the late fifties, including Paulo Freire, were not aiming at 'revolution,'[23] if this term is understood as armed struggle for structural transformation. The objective was democratic reform and capitalist national development.[24] The political programme to attain this objective was mostly formulated by the Instituto Social de Estudos Brasileiros (ISEB). It seems that ISEB was a very important entity in Brazil's development during the fifties and early sixties.[25] Among the intellectuals who wrote for it, we can mention Helio Jaguaribe (founder), Alberto Guerreiro Ramos, Gilberto Freyre, Roland Corbisier and Alvaro Vieira Pinto. The impact of these and other Brazilian writers upon Paulo Freire, his ideas and methods, is discussed in careful detail by Vanilda Pereira Paiva.[26]

In Pereira Paiva's theory, the intellectual environment of Brazil between 1930 and 1960 changed in tune with the country's social and economic transformation: what originated in the thirties as theories to defend an authoritarian government based upon a selective voting system whereby voters would be the most educated and cultured citizens, was transformed by ISEB into a defense of formal liberal democracy, and into the acceptance of universal suffrage as the foundation of democracy.[27] Brazilian society was seen by ISEB as moving from the closed confines of the colonial legacy (an archaic or closed society) towards a "modern" society. It was felt that new ideas were needed to orient this transition and that those who represented promising new ideas should be in control of the State. In order to obtain democratic political control it was necessary to mobilize the civil society. Political control was to be obtained through the vote. Yet, the majority of the population was seen as "unprepared" for democracy.[28] Education was one possible solution to the dilemma.

Pereira Paiva states that Freire's pedagogy was an instrument of this ideological process because (1) it helped to form and mobilize the civil society for the electoral conquest of the state machinery, and/or (2) it prepared the civil society to support the reforms proposed by the State itself. The method was intended by the government as a means to readjust "archaic" ideas and beliefs to make them compatible with urban, industrial life (assumed to be modern and rational); to promote a struggle against "magical consciousness," characteristic of an "archaic" society, and to open up a discussion of themes that could make it possible to develop "new" forms of consciousness, more adequate to the new era.[29]

The above was not dissonant with Freire's Catholicism, as during the fifties it became increasingly common in progressive Catholic circles to state that in order to humanize people it was first necessary to offer them human living conditions, including a minimum of material conditions that would be brought by economic development.[30]

The practical purposes of Freire's literacy method are seen by Pereira Paiva evidenced in the fact that the words voto-povo (vote-the people) were used as key ('generating') words in many of Freire's literacy experiments. The use of those words, she affirms, was a concrete translation of the political ideals that were behind the elaboration of the method itself. The idea, again, was to prepare the Brazilian people for participation in the electoral process (democracy) on behalf of the ideology developed by ISEB during the fifties (developmental nationalism).[31] This becomes transparent, according to Pereira Paiva, in the doctoral dissertation which Freire submitted to the University of Recife in 1959. She asserts that Freire's Education as the Practice of Freedom is a re-formulation of his 1959 doctoral dissertation, and was first published in 1965.

Brevity precludes us from entering into a detailed analysis of the changes Pereira Paiva observes between the 1959 and 1964 versions of Freire's thesis.[32] Yet, the reader of Education as the Practice of Freedom can examine the influence of ISEB and its ideology of developmental nationalism, by paying special attention to the footnotes which appear in the book.

There is another aspect of Freire's work in Brazil that must be mentioned. We refer to the fact that in 1963 the U.S. AID financed the use of Freire's literacy method in Brazil. Pereira Paiva explains the incidents that led to U.S. AID assistance as an effort by the United States to prevent northeast Brazil from being influenced by the Cuban Revolution. The Peasant Leagues and the popular movements in Brazil's northeast were coupled with the formation of broad Popular Fronts for electoral purposes. These Fronts included the Communists. Pereira Paiva establishes that in 1946, the Front of Recife was created including Communists, Socialists, Leftist Catholics, and Leftist wings of the Brazilian Worker's Party and the Social Democratic Party. Since, the electoral impact of the Front started to grow due to an increased rural-urban migration: by 1964 the city of Recife counted on 33% of the electorate in the entire State of Pernambuco. The Fronts' strategy was to elect their candidates as mayors of the states' capitals, and later on, as state governors. This strategy succeeded in the State of Pernambuco, where in 1962 the former Mayor of Recife, Miguel Arraes, was elected governor.[33] The United States panicked.[34]

The Cuban Revolution had triumphed in 1959. In 1961 President Kennedy created the Alliance for Progress and created an U.S. AID office for Brazil locating it precisely in Recife. An officer of the AID quoted by Pereira Paiva, stated that the United States saw Brazil's northeast as an international security problem. The economic assistance provided to Brazil was intended as a weapon against a threat that the United States thought was not "unanimously perceived in Brazil." It was a matter of defeating "the Communist threat," which the United States saw evidenced in the Peasant Leagues and the electoral victories of the _Fronts_.[35]

Educational reforms were present in the platform of all the political candidates brought into power by the _Fronts_, specifically, a literacy campaign.[36] The "radicalization" of the northeast coincided with the availability of what appeared to be a non-threatening, cost-effective method to teach literacy. Freire was offered financial assistance by AID to experiment with his method in a large scale campaign that would be conducted in the state of Río Grande del Norte (the next one in line planned by the _Front_ for electing as governor a former mayor). Freire's catholicism and apparent anti-Communism[37] seemed to guarantee that his method, as stated by a Brazilian rightist newspaper, would not only teach illiterates to read and write, but _also_ "to love democracy."[38] AID's intention was to pacify the northeast.

It is said by Pereira Paiva that Freire's acceptance of AID's offer created tensions among the forces of the Left, because the campaign was seen as a threat to the above-mentioned electoral strategy planned by the _Front_ for Rio Grande del Norte. Tensions were eased, says Pereira Paiva, when Freire obtained two important concessions: (1) there would be no interference from authorities with his program's contents, and (2) students would be incorporated at all program levels, including program direction.[39] Freire, says Pereira Paiva, truly believed that U.S. financing was due to the success of his literacy _technique_, and that it was convenient to accept assistance.[40]

The program announcement (January, 1963) was welcomed by everyone, asserts Pereira Paiva, including some rightist elements. Yet, soon after, the program was denounced by the Right as "Communist."[41] AID withdrew its support, officially arguing "an inadequacy of the method's didactic procedures" as its reasons, but, in fact, seeing the method as a factory of 'revolutionaries'.[42] It was far from that, in the opinion of Pereira Paiva. Yet, the anti-Communist paranoia of the United States, as well as of the rightist elements in Brazil after the coup of 1964, gave Freire's method precisely such an aura at the international level.[43]

When AID withdrew its financial support, the method was ready to be launched at the national level. It had attracted the attention of the constitutional President, Joao Goulart. Plans had been laid out (end of 1963-1964) for a National Literacy Campaign using Freire's method, which was considered by the government as an instrument capable of rapidly preparing illiterates to support its liberal reforms program by means of their votes.[44] Christian students, on the other hand, supported the method as "a means to transform the masses into a people" *without being directive*. The militants in the Left saw the method as a means to initiate the political organization of the popular classes, who would be motivated by the contents *transmitted* by the program. Such were, in Pereira Paiva's theory, the arguments and practices which claimed to be inspired in Freire's program. As it would happen a decade later in the United States, Freire's ideas in Brazil were given the most diverse meanings due to the ambiguity of his theoretical formulations.[45]

A crucial issue in Brazil and elsewhere is whether or not the method is directive and if so, to what extent. Pereira Paiva says that the Brazilian Left opposed the method because it was *not* directive, but nonetheless, *used it* for the political organization of the new literates. The progressive Christians were more interested in the transformation of the illiterate into a "person," leaving untouched any specific plans for a concrete political organization. The *contents* of the program seemed to be adequate both for the use of populist politicians and the more leftist northeastern Fronts.[46] At the end of Goulart's regime, to use the method meant to defend national reforms against imperialism. The method's objective was the "democratization" of Brazil, and this could be interpreted in many ways.[47]

The military coup brought the reform movement to an end. Freire was expelled from his university position, arrested and jailed by the military. This increased his popularity in leftist circles as a revolutionary hero. He was 43 years old.

Through negotiations Freire was allowed political assylum in the Bolivian embassy, after which he became a political exile.[48] He lived in the pre-Allende Chile developing his literacy method from 1964 to 1969. Then he accepted an invitation by Harvard University to become a visiting professor. Also, late in the sixties, he spent two summers in Ivan Illich's Center for Information and Documentation (CIDOC) in Cuernavaca, Mexico, and published what is perhaps his most famous book, Pedagogy of the Oppressed. In 1971 he created the Institute for Cultural Action (IDAC) in Geneva, Switzerland, where he also lived and worked with the World Council of Churches (WCC). Freire's visit to Harvard led to his evaluation of U.S. society.

IDAC has produced a series of monographs, one of which summarizes the impact of Freire's direct encounter with the United States: "Freire's illusions about democracy gave way to a more rigorous analysis of the contradictions —existing in each society—between oppressor and oppressed." According to IDAC, this came about due to Freire's observation of two things that struck him: (1) "massive oppression in a place which he had previously thought as the center of material prosperity," and (2) "the degree of alienation and domestication which an entire series of social control institutions imposed on large sections of the American public, including the working class."[49] The United States was, indeed, an alien world when compared to Latin America.

Notes to Section 1: Who is Paulo Freire?

1. Robert Mackie, ed., Literacy and Revolution. The Pedagogy of Paulo Freire (New York: Continuum, 1981). The book's back cover informs that Mackie teaches at the University of New Castle, Australia, on the subjects of radical education and Marxist social theory. Mackie's review of Freire's life is offered in the "Introduction" Mackie writes to the book, pp. 3-8.

2. Paulo Freire, Concientización (Bogotá: Association of Educational Publishers, 1972), pp. 15-18. The publisher is an association of Catholic organizations. The autobiographical notes published in this 107-page Spanish booklet were originally written in Chile, to answer the request of Mario Moreira Alves, a Brazilian journalist who was seeking personal testimonies of Christians persecuted by the military Junta that was responsible for the 1964 coup in Brazil. Moreira Alves' El Cristo del Pueblo ("The Christ of the People") (Chile: Ediciones Erchilla, 1970) is the book in which the testimonies were published. Freire's appears on pp. 247-50.

3. The biographical notes that follow were constructed through the use of the sources quoted in the first paragraph, in addition to bits of information obtained in books which review the history of Brazil in the 20th century.

4. Paulo Freire, "The Importance of the Act of Reading," Journal of Education, 165:1 (1983), p. 8.

5. This and other quotes from Freire I transcribed from a group of seven cassette tapes which record the proceedings of the conference "Literacy, Empowerment and Social Change," held at the University of Vermont, Burlington, April 20-24, 1981. The cassettes are divided into two groups: "Blue Series" (4 cassettes) and "Green Series" (3 cassettes), all sequentially numbered by side. Each cassette has a 90-minute duration. They were sold by the University of Vermont one month after the conference. I will identify the quotes referring to this source as either "Green" or "Blue" series, and the cassette side number in which the quote appears.

6. Green Series, Side 4.

7. Freire, Concientización, p. 17.

8. Ibid.

9. César Jerez and Juan Hernández-Picó, "Cultural Action for Freedom," in Paulo Freire, USCC/LADOC Keyhole Series No. 1, Washington, D.C.,

n.d., p. 29. The authors do not offer their source for this statement, which directly contradicts Freire's own account of his law career.

10. Freire, *Concientización*, p. 17. Freire does not offer information on his work in SESI: only the positions he held there. Through secondary sources I have found that SESI was a private entity created by employers to assist workers, through combined funds: employers contributed some monies and a portion of the workers' pay was deducted for SESI's activities. In a telephone interview with a person that knows well Freire's life in Brazil, the person told me that it was his preference not to discuss SESI or Freire's work in it. This is an aspect that deserves further investigation if we are to understand Freire's occupational life prior to the development of his literacy method. Vanilda Pereira Paiva's *Paulo Freire y el Nacionalismo Desarrollista* ("Paulo Freire and Developmentalist Nationalism") (México: Extemporáneos, 1981), refers to Freire's work in SESI, again assuming that the readers know what it was. She asserts that in his 1959 doctoral dissertation Freire mentions SESI as an example of "an educational work for non-assistentialist participation (...) without judging the institution [SESI] or its structure." It is the opinion of Pereira Paiva that "Freire wanted to work against the assistentialist aspect of SESI, which was fomented by employers to help the industrial workers, making them participate as if it were a matter of the workers themselves." It seems that "workers' clubs" were organized in which workers could discuss the problems of their neighborhoods and city, to give workers "a socially responsible sense." (p. 99) The bottom line, it seems to me, is to find out if this was an employer's initiative, as some persons have told me. We just do not know.

11. Freire, *Concientización*, p. 17. He states that, at SESI, he reinitiated his dialogue with the people. If this is the origin to which Freire traces his method, conducting research on SESI, it seems to me, would be a theme deserving the attention of researchers who are interested in Freire. Such research is out of the scope of this essay.

12. The Catholic Action Movement (CAM) and its evolution, is best explained by Emanuel de Kadt's *Catholic Radicals in Brazil* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970). Also, see Samuel Silva-Gotay's *El Pensamiento Cristiano Revolucionario en América Latina y el Caribe* (Christian Revolutionary Thought in Latin America and the Caribbean), 2d ed. (Río Piedras, Puerto Rico: Cordillera/Ediciones Sígueme, 1983). Silva-Gotay traces CAM to an encyclical of Pope Pious XI in 1931 which sought for a "third way," neither capitalist nor socialist, based upon the Christian social philosophy on capital and work, and based upon the concept of "charity." (p. 40) It advised Catholics to create corporate structures integrated by employers and workers. It gave a thrust to the aim of re-Christianization of society through the "humanization of capitalism," best exemplified in the writings

of French Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain. CAM was far from being a 'radical' entity and Freire has explained his and Elsa's disillusionment with CAM (Mackie, Literacy and Revolution, p. 3).

13. Pereira Paiva, Paulo Freire y el Nacionalismo Desarrollista, p. 77, hereinafter referred to as Paulo Freire.

14. Mackie, Literacy and Revolution, p. 4. There is some confusion as to the progress of Freire's university studies. Mackie says that Freire went from high school to the University of Recife "where he studied to be a teacher of Portuguese," and makes no mention of Freire's law studies or of his graduation as a lawyer, to which Freire admits in Concientización. Freire places himself as a university law student at the age of 20 (1941) and, at the same time, as a teacher of Portuguese in a secondary school in which he worked to help his brothers support the family (Concientización, p. 12). It is not known when he returned to the university to pursue the doctoral studies which he completed shortly after 1959.

15. The Popular Culture Movement (PCM) was sponsored by the Mayor of Recife, Miguel Arraes. (See note 16 below.) The transfer of this acitivity to the University of Recife is explained by Emanuel de Kadt's Catholic Radicals, as follows: "From its inception in 1960 many of those who helped to direct its activities [those of PCM] were members of JUC [Catholic University Youth]. And although the leadership remained in the hands of Catholics, members of the Communist Party became increasingly influential among the rank and file as time went by. It was at least partly in reaction to this development that Paulo Freire transferred his (populist) método to the Cultural Extension Service of the University of Recife." (p. 104).

16. Mackie's Literacy and Revolution, states: "In 1962, Miguel Arraes... sponsored a programme to promote adult literacy in the municipality of Recife, and appointed Paulo Freire as its coordinator. It was in this context that the famous 'culture circles' were launched." (p. 4) Yet, de Kadt states that Recife's PCM started in 1960. (See note 15 above.)

17. Miguel Arraes, Brasil: Pueblo y Poder ("Brazil: The People and the Power") (México: Ediciones Era, 1971), pp. 43-65. See also Clift Barnard's "Imperialism, Underdevelopment and Education," in Mackie's Literacy and Revolution, pp. 12-38. Arraes' book is one of the sources used by Barnard.

18. The rural areas will not evidence unrest until the fifties.

19. Arraes, in Pueblo y Poder, presents the events which led to the 1964 coup as a contest between segments of the ruling classes: the emerging Brazilian industrialists against the entrenched oligarchic burgeoisie. The former were open to industrialization, the latter

against. But the picture is not clear-cut, as both groups crossed lines among political parties (of which there were many). All generalizations should thus be taken very cautiously. Arraes was an actor in the events which led to the coup. He was elected first as Mayor of Recife and later as Governor of the State of Pernambuco by an alliance of "progressive" forces which included political groups ranging from liberals to Communists. Arraes considers "armed struggle" as the only option left in Brazil. Yet, I have been told that, as of this writing, he has returned to Brazil, that he lives there, and that he has even participated in an electoral campaign. This information I have not been able to confirm, but deserves to be examined in the light of Arraes' analysis and the radical positions expressed in his book.

20. Arraes, Pueblo y Poder, p. 118.

21. This unrest warrants caution when we try to understand what happened. The Peasant Leagues are an excellent example, as they have been interpreted in the most diverse ways. Arraes says: "In 1956 Francisco Juliao founded the first Peasant Leagues. Immediately afterwards, the Church launched a campaign for the organization of rural syndicates. Peasant's struggles started to have an effect in the life of some regions and the problem of agrarian reform, hidden till then because it was considered an extremely explosive issue, became an unavoidable theme." (Pueblo y Poder, p. 122.) Emanuel de Kadt's Catholic Radicals strongly criticizes Juliao, who de Kadt says "gained in stridency in the early 1960's" (p. 26) and whose motives are judged as a ploy "to advance his political career." (pp. 27-28) De Kadt believes that both the "leagues" and "syndicates" were "organizations stimulated from above and built from the top downwards," (p. 111) by which he means that these were not genuinely "peasants' struggles, but organized by members of the progressive élite for a variety of purposes. The Church at first wanted to fight "Communism" but the movement of rural syndicalization got out of its hands and was taken up, against strong criticism from the Church hierarchy, by radical sectors of the Church. These radicals saw the syndicates as organizations for the revolutionary transformation of the country, through the long range (this is very important) process of conscientization. Catholic radicals were not for armed struggle (de Kadt, Catholic Radicals, pp. 112-13), at least not before the 1964 coup.

22. Arraes, in Pueblo y Poder, saw the events which led to the 1964 coup as an economic struggle within the élite. He believes that it came to a point in which the industrial Brazilian burgeoisie did not realize that it had been conquered by imperialism during the fifties (p. 120).

23. Precisely because "the nationalist movement, formed by different parties and by men who originated in diverse social environments, brought together different interests. An industrialist, a worker,

a liberal, and a Communist, all could very well be nationalists since they all opposed foreign control." (Arraes, Pueblo y Poder, p. 118.) On the stand of the Communist Party, Emmanuel de Kadt's Catholic Radicals informs: "The Communists were wrong. Their conception of collaborating with 'all nationalists and democrats' in a united front, which would bring together the 'largest number of patriots, irrespective of their class position or party affiliation' certainly overestimated the 'patriotism' of the burgeoisie as a whole, and their willingness to oppose 'imperialism.'" (p. 100) On the same subject, Arraes says that since 1954, the Communist Party adopted the line [described by de Kadt] (p. 130). All authors I have reviewed seem to agree that the popular or people's forces were very divided organizationally and programmatically, and that there was not a single group sufficiently organized to resist the bloodless coup of 1964. The feeling I get is that, for all the talk of revolution, not a single organization considered that structural reforms could be stopped by force.

24. Pereira Paiva's book (see note 10 above), although specifically devoted to examine the intellectual formation of Paulo Freire in Brazil until 1965, enters into the formation of the Brazilian intellectuals in the 1940's and 1950's, who impacted upon Freire's ideas and methods. In her opinion, the programme which emerged out of Brazil's intellectual life and economic transformation between 1930-1960 was that of developmental nationalism, a programme that was not revolutionary but reformist, and within the parameters of capitalist liberal democracy. I have accepted her conclusion.

25. See Paulo Freire's evaluation of ISEB in his Education as the Practice of Freedom (written in 1965) published in Education for Critical Consciousness (New York: Continuum, 1981): "ISEB thought of Brazil as its own reality, as a project. To think of Brazil as a Subject was to identify oneself with Brazil as it really was. The power of the ISEB thinking had its origins in this integration with the newly discovered and newly valued national reality. Two important consequences emerged: the creative power of intellectuals who placed themselves at the service of the national culture, and commitment to the destiny of the reality those intellectuals considered and assumed as their own. It was not by accident that ISEB, although it was not a university, spoke to and was heard by an entire university generation and, although it was not a worker's union, gave conferences in trade unions." (p. 40)

26. In Paulo Freire. See notes 24 and 10 above.

27. Pereira Paiva, Paulo Freire, p. 54. It is interesting to note that Miguel Arraes, in Pueblo y Poder, says ISEB gave the definitive theoretical base to the ideology of the national burgeoisie, which turned 'nationalism' into its weapon. Written before Pereira Paiva's book, Arraes' describes the ideological transition of ISEB's intel-

lectuals in very similar terms to those of Pereira Paiva. "The *integralist movement*, of openly fascist tendencies had tried to turn nationalism into a coherent doctrinal system; the group of intellectuals for the most part integralist in origin, that later on founded ISEB, finally gave it its definitive theoretical base." (p. 129)

28. Under the impact of, among others, José Ortega y Gasset's *La rebelión de las masas* (The Rebellion of the Masses), both in Europe and Latin America there was a concern among intellectuals that "the masses" had entered into the political arena, like it or not, and that "something had to be done about it." Here in Puerto Rico the concern was (and still is) present among the intellectual elite, as Pereira Paiva says it happened in Brazil. The very term "the masses," later on softened into "the people" depicts the "poor," "oppressed" or "exploited" (depending on your point of view) as ignorant, emotional, subject to manipulation—massification because they are not "educated." The drive is to "humanize" them; to turn them into "persons." In the United States it is expressed as "bringing them to the mainstream." The "masses" are not deemed capable of acting as responsible citizens unless they are "educated into" democracy. The whole thing, in my opinion, is nothing more than the elitist view of the well-to-do (including intellectuals) for which "the masses" are felt as a threat. As a solution, the option is to *manipulate them into* a particular political program that can range from reforms to "revolution," depending on the preference of the élite members in charge of "humanizing" the "masses." In the particular case of Brazil it seems that there were so many different groups trying to reach the "masses" for so many different purposes, that when the coup came about to wipe them all they were so fragmented that none could resist. The "masses," perhaps wisely, did not move a finger to stop what was being destroyed by the military.

29. Pereira Paiva, *Paulo Freire*, p. 86. Freire's method, originally developed at a *small scale* in Recife, was moved to the national level one year before the coup, that is, in 1963. The process will be described further on along the essay. At this moment what seems important is to observe the ways in which the mentality of the "masses" is described, and what Freire's method was intended to change.

30. Catholicism in Brazil underwent important changes between 1930-1960's. The influence of Jacques Maritain diminished as the writings of Emmanuel Mounier became known. Mounier, also French, fought during the II World War in the French resistance, together with Communists. He opened a door to a dialogue among Christians and Marxists for the reconstruction of a Europe without wars and without class exploitation. (Silva Gotay, *Pensamiento Cristiano Revolucionario*, pp. 41-42). The transition from adopting Maritain to adopting Mounier's ideas took a long time, and is a complex subject that I cannot adequately summarize here. Yet, it is important to state that by the early

sixties there was a search for a non-Communist Socialism, a democratic Socialism in which the person (thus the label "personalist") would be deemed of utmost importance. The strongest advocates for the new position were the Christian university students. The position included: overcoming underdevelopment; liquidation of capitalism and private property, to be substituted by "an effective instrument for the personalization of all Brazilians; nationalization of the basic sectors of production; a planned economy based upon the principles of Christian personalism; a pluralist democracy in which political parties would side with the interests of the least-favoured classes; a government that would not be subject to capitalist pressure groups and which would promote development to benefit the people; and non-alignment at the international level." (Pereira Paiva, Paulo Freire, p. 59) See Emanuel de Kadt's Catholic Radicals for more detailed information. Pereira Paiva considers that the radical Catholic university students may have had a strong impact on Freire, causing a lag between his theory and his practice that is still evident in Freire's Education as the Practice of Freedom, in which Freire quotes both Mounier and Maritain. I should add that when Freire quotes Mounier he follows the quote with an attack of "irrational sectarians, including some Christians, [who] either did not understand or did not want to understand the radical's search for integration with Brazilian problems." (Practice of Freedom, p. 12)

31. Pereira Paiva, Paulo Freire, p. 127.

32. A summary of the changes observed by Pereira Paiva: a transition from "an originally authoritarian position... to the defense of burgeois democracy, and then to a less clearly defined position in the direction of a defense of the popular classes." Pereira Paiva perceives "a serious contradiction" between Freire's theory and practice due to the fragility of the theoretical formulation of Freire given the societal conflicts in which the theory was immersed (pp. 221-22). It should be clearly understood that Pereira Paiva's analysis only includes the work and theory of Freire to 1965.

33. Pereira Paiva, Paulo Freire, pp. 20-21.

34. On the reaction of the United States to these events, John Gunther in Inside South America (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), reports: "Brazil, it seemed, might be on the way of becoming another Cuba, and this, in the Washington view, might mean in turn that all the rest of South America could be influenced to follow suit." (p. 39) Gunther adds that "this was not quite the case." A strange and fascinating book with no footnotes or bibliography for readers to judge the accuracy of the author's work, offers an enormous amount of economic, diplomatic and congressional data (both about Brazil and the U.S.) on the entire period: see Jordan M. Young, ed., Brazil 1954-64: End of a Civilian Cycle, Interim History Series (New York: Facts on File, 1972).

35. Pereira Paiva, *Paulo Freire*, p. 22.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

37. We have already mentioned Emanuel de Kadt's opinion on Freire's differences with Communists (see note 15 above). Pereira Paiva mentions—but does not explain—that there were "tensions between Freire and the communists during Arraes' electoral campaign for Governor of Pernambuco" and that this served as a guarantee against any suspicion that the Freire method might be subversive (p. 24). There is no additional information as to Freire's relationships with Communists.

38. Pereira Paiva, *Paulo Freire*, p. 25.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

41. Vanilda Pereira Paiva *describes, but does not explain*, this apparently sudden change of attitude towards the Freire method (p. 25). Emanuel de Kadt's account suggests that the turbulence of 1963 in which Catholic radicals entered into tactic alliances with Communists, while at the same time using the Freire method, and openly acting against the Catholic Church's hierarchy—which was parading "the communist menace before the faithful" (p. 76)—may have had something to do with the reaction against the Freire method. The issue is important and very obscure, in part because the 1964 coup captured and/or destroyed many documents of 1963, all considered 'subversive:' "that so conveniently vague term with which to stigmatize any instrument of unwelcome change." (de Kadt, p. 151) In de Kadt's opinion, "Incitement to revolt was never Freire's direct objective as an educator, though democratization was; thus he rejected authoritarian methods in education, the social palliative of [welfareism], and the stiffling of political expression through *massificaçao* [massification]." (p. 104)

42. Joseph Page, *The Revolution That Never Was* (New York, 1972), quoted among others by Pereira Paiva in *Paulo Freire*, as her source; p. 29.

43. The military coup made no distinctions when accusing people of subversion. See Hubert Herring, *Evolución Histórica de América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria, 1972), Vol. 2, p. 1065; Mario Moreira Alves, *El Cristo del Pueblo*, pp. 293-95; and John Gunther's *Inside South America*, p. 44. Freire himself has stated: "*What does leave me perplexed* is to hear or read that I intended to 'Bolchevize the country' with my method. In fact, my actual crime was that I treated literacy as more than a mechanical problem, and linked it to *conscientizaçao*, which was 'dangerous.' It was that I viewed education as an effort to liberate men, not as yet another

instrument to dominate them." (Education as the Practice of Freedom, p. 57 in his footnote 24.)

44. Pereira Paiva, Paulo Freire, pp. 25-26.

45. Ibid., pp. 26-27.

46. Ibid.

47 The proliferation of movements and entities defending reforms mentioned by Arraes (see notes 19, 21 and 23 above) in the face of a government that had been abandoned by the burgeoisie and basing its support on a 'people' mobilized by different and fragmented groups, makes it easy to understand that this was probably the case.

48. Mackie, Literacy and Revolution, p. 5. No information is available as to the nature of these negotiations.

49. Pierre Dominicé and Rosika Darcy, The Pedagogy of the Oppressed. The Oppression of Pedagogy. Paulo Freire. Ivan Illich, IDAC Document #8 (Geneva, 1974), p. 25.

Section 2

HOW IS FREIRE SEEN IN THE UNITED STATES?

Paulo Freire has provoked and continues to provoke mixed reactions in the United States since his first visit in 1969-70.[1] At first, he was inextricably linked to a literacy method or technique, especially among academics engaged in adult education. Yet, as early as 1973, Freire was proclaimed to be "a revolutionary dilemma" for U.S. adult educators.[2] In 1975 it was back to literacy, through an article that proclaimed "literacy in 30 hours" as the results obtained with the Paulo Freire method.[3] The interest in Freire has oscillated between those who are more inclined to his literacy technique, and those who are moved by his educational philosophy and process.

In 1981, while Mackie edits a book devoted to examine the links between the pedagogy of Paulo Freire, literacy and revolution (in an excellent critical manner), a new book in the United States by Patricia Cross looking at Adults as Learners,[4] classifies Freire as a developmental theoricist of adult education, and only refers to his work in Brazil and Chile prior to 1970 (a total number of five lines within a 287-page book). In the United States, Freire is read and interpreted in the most diverse circles in amazingly contradictory ways.

A common criticism made to Freire in the United States is that his writings are "obscure." For instance, a booklet produced by the U.S. Catholic Conference (USCC) states: "Paulo Freire is very much in vogue these days, but anyone who reads him will agree that he has a desiccated (sic), metaphysical way of wrapping up his ideas that is most disconcerting."[5] William Smith has stated that Freire's writings are "abstract and dense almost to the point of impenetrability."[6] There are, indeed, several problems in trying to understand Freire within the United States context.

Members of his team at IDAC have stated that, in order to be able to grasp the totality of Freire's intellectual development, you must be, or must have been, *all* of the following: Latin American, Catholic, Marxist and an Educator.[7] A lack of understanding of Freire's intellectual development is, in my opinion, a key issue. Freire's thought is *still* evolving. His writings—and related bibliography—are published in the United States usually outdated, and his published books do not convey *when* and *where* Freire *wrote* each. There *is* a pattern in the development of Freire's work that *can* be traced if his books are read in the chronological order in which they were written and evaluated vis-a-vis Freire's practice at that particular time. But this chronological order and other essential bibliographical sources about Freire are, for the most part, unknown and not easily available to U.S. readers.

As of this writing, a new book which collects writings of and about Freire over the seventies has been published...in German![8] It will not be available in Spanish until late 1984 and in English no one knows, as it has not yet been accepted for publication in the English language. Who knows what is in there? A second example is Pereira Paiva's book. I deem it essential to attempt an understanding of the intellectual formation of Paulo Freire before he became internationally famous. As of now, it is only available in Portuguese and Spanish.[9] Pereira Paiva's research product enables us to test the romantic notion of a 'revolutionary' Freire that was arrested and jailed in Brazil.

A third and last example is a doctoral dissertation written in Canada evaluating Freire's work in Guinea-Bissau, a theme I shall discuss later on.[10] At this moment, the important thing to share is that the dissertation brings to the fore significant elements that cannot be gleaned from Freire's book about his work in Guinea-Bissau. The dissertation is unpublished.

The fact that Freire's chronological intellectual development as per his books and related bibiliography are not easily available in the United

States, is coupled with the fact that Paulo Freire is an eclectic who relies heavily in Catholic, existentialist, phenomenological and Marxist philosophy.[11] This is far from the usual bibliography U.S. students (even graduate students) are required to read in most U.S. colleges and universities. Let us see Freire's own view of the problem as he discussed it in 1981:[12]

> In Germany, my work is found to be transparent, easy, due—perhaps—to the Germans' long experience with dialectic thought. They want *theory*, not facts. In the U.S. people want *facts*, not theory. But facts do not stand by themselves without theory. My books are printed every year in Germany, and are used by many universities in their academic departments.
>
> Workers also understand my work, as well as those who have some experience of oppression. But I acknowledge there might be a problem of cross-cultural translation with U.S. readers.[13]

Freire continues his analysis:

> I try to think dialectically by trying to understand contradictions and how they work in reality, not as a given out there, but as something that is in a process of giving itself; something that is not static, that is becoming. How can I describe reality with a static language? My language *has* to be contradictory in order to grasp a contradictory reality.
>
> But in the United States the habit is to think not dialectically but in a positivistic way. And then my language becomes "mysterious."

At a question as to why he uses such an "academic" language, he responds:

> I did not write for the peasants but for those who can work with them. If a graduate student in education cannot read my books, then you cannot understand Sartre, Hegel, and not even Dewey. And your universities have to start all over again!

Freire has made strong criticism to the education provided by most U.S. universities, particularly in doctoral programs, describing them as "eating books" instead of reading them, which provokes "an indigestion of books." He despises the fact that professors feel it is within their right to prescribe exactly which pages of a book a student should read, as if this could give the student a comprehension of the author's thought. Reading a book, Freire has stated, is like re-writing it, nothing to be done in a hurried fashion only because a required long bibliography awaits to be read in a prescribed period. But there is more.

> To understand my books you have to have experience with the people—not just with books! What I describe I did.[14]

The "obscurity" problem, stemming, in my opinion, from the elements already mentioned, is compounded when U.S. readers try to make sense of the many contradictions that can be identified in Freire's writings. When these are pointed out to Freire in face-to-face encounters, he responds very strongly: "I have the right to be contradictory!" And he does, indeed. Yet, within the U.S. environment this argument is not very helpful for persons who are attracted to Freire's theory and who are trying to make sense out of it as a basis to create and/or develop non-oppressive educational programs. For the land of all kind of manuals which explain "how-to" everything in a step-by-step fashion, Freire's refusal to give this type of information results in a considerable amount of frustration, if not anger.

Freire understands this very well and also the fact that he is not familiar with daily life in the United States. His attitude is, more or less: "You guys have to formulate your own theory, and develop your own solutions." But, sadly enough, in conferences where Freire is the "star" (a position that he has said he strongly resents), literacy workers, community organizers and adult educators try to squeeze out from him solutions to the problems they face at their local sites. Freire invariably responds with an anecdote about his work in Brazil, Chile or Guinea-Bissau. As to what the anecdote means within the U.S. context... Well, friend, that is your problem!

One of Freire's main tenets is that education is political.[15] This is accepted by some liberals and everyone to their political left. The problem is, what does that *mean*? *Which* politics conduct to a non-oppressive (thus, liberating) educational program? Responses are as varied as the political preference of the person who asks the question, and the fact is that all can quote Freire out of context to prove their point because, as I have said, Freire's thought has evolved along the years and it is still in that process. The results are heated debates (*not* dialogues) as to what Freire means, and little action or theory construction as to what must be done in the United States.

Freire attacks sectarianism from both Left and Right. This is often quoted by sectarians in the U.S. to accuse their ideological opponents of being sectarian. It becomes another game of words wherein Freire is quoted in support of almost any political preference. Freire argues for "revolution." At the same time, he declares himself a "pacifist" and has stated that, although he understands that revolutions are not made with flowers, he does not "like to think on violent transformation" adding that he "prefers to be called burgeois."

"Fine revolutionary you are, Paulo. You cannot even kill a chicken" —this is a personal anecdote of a phrase his wife, Elsa, once told him and that Freire often quotes in seminars. Another phrase by Freire in this context: "I can't kill you, but if you hurt my wife, I could kill you—unless I have thirty minutes to think about it." What kind of revolution then Freire advocates for?[16] In Puerto Rico we cannot help but remember books invariably written by U.S. social scientists admiring the "quiet, peaceful revolution" that Puerto Rico underwent during the fifties and sixties while our economy was being devastated by U.S. capital, making 60% of our families dependent on food-stamps. Those in the U.S. who consider Freire as a revolutionary in Brazil prior to the 1964 military coup, would do well to re-read his first book, and to compare this with their personal definitions of what constitutes a "revolutionary."

Freire has made an absolute division of the world into oppressed and oppressors. You *must* be one or the other. In recent years, in Freire's thought, the oppressed have become more clearly identified with groups that in the United States are called "the poor." In international terms, the oppressed are Third World countries, and inhabitants of the Third World who reside and are subjected to exploitation and racism in "advanced" industrial countries which constitute the First World. There are also "First Worlds" (the elite) in underdeveloped countries. For Freire, it is no longer a matter of geography.

The oppressed must fight for their liberation in order to become human, says Freire. And those in the middle classes and upper stratas of society who side with the oppressed must commit an individual class suicide. The image is similar to the Catholic version of Easter—to die and be reborn as humans in a kind of spiritual transformation.

Freire's politics have received the most diverse type of descriptions, some of which are: elitist (Manfred Stanley);[17] a revolutionary Socialist, as distinct from a humanist Socialist or a Marxist Socialist;[18] a romantic (Griffith,[19] and, to some extent, Walker[20]), to name but a few.

These classifications and labels originate in the fact that, since his second book, the Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire has started to quote Marx in empathetic terms, as well as Ché, Fidel Castro, and Mao-Tse-Tung. Quoting Marx does not make him a Marxist. Freire seems to be more inclined to the strongly Hegelian writings of the young Marx (which Marx himself never published). It is glaringly clear in Freire's books that, in his theory,[21]

> there is no primacy of economic and historical materialism as the bases for revolution (...) Freire ignores the political economy of revolution in favor of an emphasis on the cultural dimension of revolution.

There cannot be a primacy of historical materialism in Freire, simply because he is a devoted Catholic ("the more I read Marx, the more I find Christ in every street," he says frequently).[22] Marx, especially the young Marx and his concept of alienation, is consonant with the progressive

Christians who believe that humans cannot become *truly* human until the basic, human, material living conditions are available to them.

Freire has increasingly exhibited a tendency to romanticize and idealize revolutionary leaders in the Third World, taking their writings at face value and, I hate to say, most *uncritically*. He looks at these leaders to *confirm* his theory: the revolutionary is a man that acts out of love, a human being who sacrifices without personal self-interest; indeed, a Christ-like figure in authentic communion with the people. While he warns that revolutions can betray their ideals and become bureaucratic and manipulative—these he labels "inauthentic"—he does not offer a concrete example of where he has seen this occur, if anywhere. Interrogated in Vermont by Jonathan Kozol about Cuba, and the highly hierarchical participatory process Kozol has perceived during his visits to the island, Freire responded:[23]

> I have not yet been in Cuba. I have friends there and friends who have been there. Cuba is not creating a paradise, because that is not the task for a revolution. A revolution makes history (...) For me the question is that the more Cuba becomes able to go towards an opening, the more Cuba will become authentically socialist. I do not think Cuba is preponderantly rigid. We also can discover in Cuba some signs of Stalinism (which is spread in the left all over the world). But Cuba cannot be compared. The Cuban *people* were able to get their history into their hands in 20 years. This could not exist if the people had been exclusively manipulated. How to explain the creativity, the presence of happiness in the streets (not just the people, the streets themselves!). I think Cuba is trying to go more and more beyond rigidity. I myself do not understand the why's of Ethiopia. I do understand Angola and Mozambique, bombarded by South Africa. I was there once and about 600 children died. They also have mediocres there, people that are not so capable. They [the mediocres] speak Spanish there and not Portuguese. This is wrong. But I never saw Cubans in ghettos separated from the Angolans.
>
> But let us assume that they commit more mistakes than right things. The important thing is the *attitudes* with which they go—as friends; as comrades. (My emphasis.)

The above should be critically examined even by those of us who *have* been in Cuba.[24]

Freire shies away from the harsh, painful, violent acts committed by both sides in any revolutionary war,[25] and reserves his criticism to the violence of oppressors. The violence of the oppressed is justified because it is reactive, defensive and made "out of love."[26] This stems, I think, from Freire's dichotomizing of the entire world in two antagonistic sides: oppressors and oppressed, leaving no space for mediators or the interlocuteurs valables. This term emerged in the Algerian war of independence and referred to moderate nationalist representatives with whom compromise solutions might be negotiated between France and the struggling Algerians. Amazingly enough, Amílcar Cabral took up the term to describe the beginning of his struggle: "We (...) the engineers, doctors, bank clerks and son on, joined together to form a group of interlocuteurs valables."*

Lester Kolakowski, who was professor of History of Philosophy at the University of Warsaw and expelled in March 1968, both from the university and from the Communist Party for political reasons, and who now teaches at Oxford University, bitter due to Stalinism (this can be felt in his writings), has very interesting things to say on the practice of using sharp, self-exclusive dichotomies.[27] In his view, when you establish a single politically correct way of looking at things, that is the road to Stalinism and it only promotes "traitors" instead of "dissidents." Then all criticism is silenced and the only result is the creation of escapists. Becoming an escapist is the only solution when you are forced to choose between the options of being "a renegade or a loyal opportunist." The escapist renounces to an active participation in political life. Any political cause defeats itself when it becomes an end and not a means, because it liquidates the possibility of future allies by producing escapists.

Kolakowski further points at the value of inconsistency,[28] which he describes as a "refusal to choose once and for all between any values whatever which mutually exclude each other."[29] He makes it very clear that he is not advocating for a middle-of-the-road position. He is only stating that the various values are, notoriously throughout history, introduced into society by mutually antagonistic forces. Inconsistency, then:[30]

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*Please refer to note 25, page 34.

> as an individual attitude is merely a consciously sustained reserve of uncertainty, a permanent feeling of possible personal error, or the possibility that one's antagonist may be right.

Kolakowski is not arguing for an absolute relativism. There are limits to inconsistency (what Kolakowski calls 'elementary situations'):[31]

> Open aggression, genocide, torture, mistreatment of the defenseless—all these are elementary situations... here we suddenly confront a dual-valued world... Inconsistency has certain limits whithin which it is valid: the limits wherein reality is contradictory. But reality is contradictory up to a certain point.

Perhaps because of Freire's radical dichotomy and his refusal to face the agonizing decisions that must be made by revolutionaries in war, his own IDAC team wonders whether Freire's program of education for liberation may only be feasible in a 'post revolutionary' situation.[32] At this time, we deem it important to bring up the very American Saul Alinsky and some of his rules for the ethics of means and ends, in Rules for Radicals:[33]

- in war the end justifies almost any means (p. 29)
- generally, success or failure is a mighty determinant of ethics (p. 34)
- any effective means is automatically judged by the opposition as being unethical (p. 35)
- you do what you can with what you have and clothe it with moral garments (p. 36).

Freire's writings (perhaps because of the reasons we have stated) are in strong disagreement with what Alinsky presents as [rather cynical, hard] rules. I think Alinsky describes the way of things as they are, and Freire describes them as he thinks they should be. In his admiration for revolutionary leaders, not once Freire examines to what extent the leaders he admires may have been guided by the above "rules."

In conversations with U.S. Alinsky-inspired community organizers, I have heard many times that Freire is "more revolutionary" than Alinsky was. This I attritube to the stated anti-Communism of Alinsky, vis-a-vis Freire's quotes of Marx, Ché, Fidel, Amílcar Cabral and Mao-Tse-Tung's cultural revolution. But we have to see Freire's quotes and remarks within a context: a context which is certainly not Communist and that includes a philosophical stand that rejects historial materialism, and which I believe to be basically personalist. Besides, let us not forget that Freire has never been directly involved in a revolutionary struggle (armed warfare), Communist or not.

It is not our intention to dwell on a comparison between Freire and Alinsky. It is the subject of a doctoral dissertation now in progress at Rutgers University. But there is another distinction we would like to point out, and it is the way Freire and Alinsky categorize humans. For Freire, as we have seen, humanity is sharply dichotomized into "oppressors" and "oppressed." For Alinsky, it is divided into the "haves," the "have-nots," and the "have some-want more."[34]

Early in the seventies Griffith referred to Freire's reliance "upon emotionally laden and vaguely defined terms."[35] If you are in agreement with Freire's view of reality you will not see this vagueness. Freire talks most imprecisely about "the correct way," about "authentic leaders" and about "political clarity." The logical inference is that the truth is his and of those who share his beliefs.

That type of attitude can be expected in a person who is on the way to become a leader (or prominent member of a vanguard of the Leninist type), preparing for revolution. Is Freire at that stage? Alinsky reminds us that, in preparing for a confrontation, you have no option but to act as if you were 100% right and to declare that you are. You cannot afford to doubt in that type of situation, if you want victory. After victory, in Alinsky's words, you "clothe with moral garments" everything you did to grab power. As J.M. García-Passalacqua reminds us, "the winning terrorists of yesterday are the respected statesmen of today."[36] As for the future, it is for us to decide.

We have seen Freire's statements on revolution and violence. Where is he at? Timid remarks have been made since 1980 to the effect that "Freire's practice does not have the liberating potential it aspires to; rather there are dangers that its potential might be the reverse,"[37] or more privately stated, "Freire may be taking us to a place where we do not want to go." The "place" is not even mentioned. A last example:[38]

> I appreciate your concerns about Freire. I too am protective—he's such a loveable guy—but he's made his contribution—and, in a way, we are all guilty of making him a guru... Paulo has been such a good friend and such an important influence—for all of us!

Early in the seventies, William Griffith warned that a logical conclusion of Freire's theory was that, after the triumph of a 'revolution,' there would be no freedom to disagree with the new ruling group.[39] Those of us who saw in Freire an inspiration were angered. Yet, as of 1984, and analyzing Freire's writings, talks and actions since the Pedagogy of the Oppressed, I am more and more inclined to agree with Griffith.

At this point, some readers may be asking, "What does all of this has to do with the subject of this essay? It has to do a lot. If we find that we are or were unclear about the meaning and objectives of the theory upon which our educational activities were or are being based, and have accepted it as inherently relevant to our work, what kind of clarity can we have when evaluating the process and outcomes of our programs? Particularly, when we are supposed to be acting and critically reflecting upon our actions!

The fact is that "we" had very little information about the issues that are here discussed when we created "pedagogy-of-the-oppressed programs." We idealized Paulo Freire and his pedagogy as a "Third World" revolutionary approach that would (by definition) be relevant to minorities (the inner Third World) in the United States. And, even though many of us were, or had been what IDAC says you should be to fully grasp Freire (Latin American, Catholics, Marxists and Educators), we were living in the United States. We crashed head-on into its complex realities.

Notes to Section 2: How is Freire Seen in the United States?

1. In Literacy and Revolution, Mackie categorizes into four types all reactions to Freire's writings: (a) those imbued by the theology of liberation who "cast Freire's work within an idealist framework" (p. 8); (b) adult educators who "fail to understand Freire's politics" and "wrestle with ways to denude, domesticate, absorb and eventually nullify the challenge [Freire makes] to functionalism" (p. 9); (c) the literacist interpreters, "often hampered by an ethnocentric view of [Freire's] methodology in relation to English-speaking cultures" (p. 9); and (d) "those who take issue more or less directly with the political impetus of his pedagogy." Mackie concludes that there is a "kaleidoscope of misinformation, misrepresentation and downright nonsense concerning Freire" (p. 10).

2. Stanley M. Grabowski, ed., Paulo Freire: A Revolutionary Dilemma for the Adult Educator (Syracuse, New York: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult Education, 1972).

3. Cynthia Brown, Literacy in Thirty Hours: Paulo Freire's Literacy Process in North East Brazil (London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1975).

4. Patricia Cross, Adults as Learners (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1982), pp. 231-32.

5. U.S. Catholic Conference, Paulo Freire, LADOC Keyhole Series No. 1, p. 3. No author given for the quote, wich appears unsigned in the introduction.

6. William Smith, The Meaning of Conscientizaçao: The Goal of Paulo Freire's Pedagogy, Center for International Education (Amherst, Mass: Univ. of Mass., 1976), p. vi. This author also produced "The C-code Manual" to "operationalize" the concept of conscientization in a joint project conducted by the School of Education of the University of Massachusetts, the Agency for International Development (AID) and the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education. One of the goals of the project was to utilize "modified forms" of Freire's methodology to demonstrate that "such a method of literacy was more effective than the literacy system then being used" The meaning of (p. 4). AID withdrew its support for Freire in 1963, but by 1972 it was proposing his method in "modified form" for Ecuador. I find this fact fascinating!

7. Dominicé and Darcy, IDAC Document #8, p. 31.

8. Paulo Freire, Der Lehrer Ist Politiker Und Künstler, Hamburg, October 1981.

9. The Portuguese version of Vanilda Pereira Paiva's book is entitled *Paulo Freire E o Nacionalismo-Devenvolvimentista* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilizaçao Brasileira, 1980).

10. Linda Harasim,"Literacy and National Reconstruction in Guinea-Bissau: A Critique of the Freirian Literacy Campaign" (Thesis for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of Toronto, 1983).

11. It is impossible to detail the impact of the many sources which nurtured Freire's eclecticism. See Mackie's "Contributions to the Thought of Paulo Freire," in *Literacy and Revolution*, pp. 93-119; also Harasim (note 9 above), pp. 347-65, sub sections entitled: "The Philosophical premises of Freire's pedagogy" (Christian Existentialism, Idealism) and "Freire and the PAIGC: Ideological Populism." A last source is Pereira Paiva's book, devoted in its entirety to describe and analyze the roots of Freire's thought until 1965 and his pedagogical ideas as the logical product of a particular period of Brazil's intellectual life.

12. Blue Series, Side 3. See note 5 in Section 1. All quotes from Freire in this and the next page were transcribed from this tape.

13. It is interesting to note, on the basis of this quote, Pereira Paiva's assertion in *Paulo Freire*, p. 28, that in the German publication of *Education as the Practice of Freedom*, whole sections and expressions in the book that dealt with Brazilian nationalism were excluded. This, she says, while allowing the text to have a more universal meaning, makes it difficult for German readers to understand both the extent to which the book is grounded in Brazil's intellectual life during 1950-60 and the book's ties with developmental nationalism.

14. We should bear in mind that the contents of most of Freire's books *are not* descriptions of what he did, but philosophical and theoretical considerations *about* what he did.

15. What is meant by Freire with this statement is that education has a political purpose. In Freire's views there are only two purposes: education is either for liberation of for domestication. But "political" here has more to do with the *ideas* behind any educational scheme; ideas that are transmitted (and can be challenged) both through the process and contents of education. It bears no relation to a specific political practice with which to organize and move to transform the political and economic structures of a *given* society in a *specific* context. Thus, the confusion. See note 25 in Section 6.

16. The quotes about violence and revolution are transcribed from the *Blue Series* cassettes, Side 5 (see note 5 in Section 1), and were statements made by Freire in 1981 in Vermont. Other quotes: "No sane person can love to kill," thus a revolutionary must estimate

"the social cost, in lives, of any military operation." This was part of an anecdote of Amílcar Cabral's stand on the subject. We will later see that Cabral did not evade this issue of the need for violence. Freire added: "I would love it if every change could be done in meetings, and if those in power would stop oppressing. Unfortunately, that is not so. (...) Who are those who hate such a quantity of people by allowing them to die in hunger? This is violence and hate at a tremendous level!" On the murder of Chilean President Salvador Allende (1973), Freire said: "I was tremendously shocked. All of us were seeing a dream destroyed. The dream of transforming society in peace, freedom, democracy. It is a *lie* that there was no freedom in Chile. I had been there, absolutely free. (...) But I also believe that it is possible to begin to transform societies with *less* cost. We have to give the best of ourselves to do that because history is changing." On his return to Brazil: "There is a new international order, new historical conditions. In Brazil I am trying to do what I can within my situation." Freire said that he has joined the Brazilian Workers' Party.

17. Manfred Stanley, "Literacy: The Crisis of Conventional Wisdom," in Grabowski, *Revolutionary Dilemma*, pp. 36-54.

18. Mackie, *Literacy and Revolution*, p. 105.

19. William Griffith, "Paulo Freire: Utopian Perspective on Literacy Education for Revolution," in Grabowski's *Revolutionary Dilemma*, p. 77.

20. Jim Walker, "The End of Dialogue: Paulo Freire on Politics and Education," in Mackie's *Literacy and Revolution*, p. 112.

21. Robert Mackie, "Contributions to the Thought of Paulo Freire," in *Literacy and Revolution*, p. 105.

22. Samuel Silva Gotay in *El Pensamiento Cristiano Revolucionario*, endeavors to prove that it *is* possible to be both a Christian and a historical materialist. Samuel does not differentiate between Protestant and Catholic Christian revolutionaries. In addition, in an interview we held on January 31, 1984, he told me that his book presents the *theory* under which historical materialism and revolutionary Christianity can find a common theological ground. I would like to remind the reader of Camilo Torres, a Catholic priest who actually joined the Colombian guerrillas for armed warfare against the oppressive government and was killed by the army in the process. Even though he took up arms, he expressed: "I could truly collaborate with the Communists in Colombia because I believe that among them there are truly revolutionary elements and because, to the extent that they are scientific, they have points that coincide with the work I have proposed myself to do... we are friends of the Communists and will go with them to grab power, without discarding the possibility that afterwards there will be a discussion on philosophic

questions. At this moment, practical matters are the important thing. (...) Communists should know that I will not join their ranks, that I am not nor will be a Communist, not as a Colombian, as a sociologist or as a priest." (Quoted by Silva Gotay, pp. 54-55). Camilo Torres is described by Silva Gotay as a "mystic devoted to revolution" (p. 55). Although I recommend Silva's book without reservation, I must say that it has not persuaded me that a Catholic can be a historical materialist. The theoretical juncture he presents, however, is fascinatingly coherent. The book (in Spanish) sells for $10. Write to CEHILA/CARIBE, Apartado 22146, UPR Station, Río Piedras, Puerto Rico 00931.

23. *Blue Series*, Side 5.

24. What does Freire mean by "the people" in his statement on Cuba, as recently as 1981? See my reflections in note 28, Section 1. Is "the people" in power in Cuba? Do we believe that "class struggle" has been eliminated by the Revolution?

25. See note 16 above. Alistair Horne in *A Savage War of Peace. Algeria 1954-62* (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), states: "It was undeniably and horribly savage, bringing death to an estimated one million Muslim Algerians and the expulsion from their homes of approximately the same number of European settlers. If the one side practiced unspeakable mutilations, the other tortured and, once it took hold, there seemd no halting the pitiless spread of violence" (p. 14). Amílcar Cabral, admired by Freire, did not evade the issue. Referring to what Portugal had turned into 'strategic hamlets' in Guinea-Bissau, he stated: "These hamlets have been subjected to violent attacks by our troops and several of them have been destroyed." Amílcar Cabral, *Revolution in Guinea: Selected Texts*, translated and edited by Richard Handyside (New York: Monthly Review, 1969), p. 115. Amílcar was murdered in 1973. There is simply no way to avoid the presence of violence in a revolution, no matter how justified the violence may seem to be.

26. I do not think that combatants can successfully face the enemy with 'love.' They may be moved by love at another, more general level, of which I will speak further on. I agree that the violence of the oppressed is *reactive*, but I do not think it is *loving*.

27. Leszek Kolakowski, *Marxism and Beyond* (Great Britain: Paladin Books, 1971). He tells us: "The problem of a single alternative is one of the most important of our time. It most adequately expresses the experience of the Stalinist era and the main tendency of the political Left resulting from that experience. The whole complex of recent political and intellectual attempts at the ideological renaissance of the revolutionary Left... may be characterized as an attempt to break through the traditional Stalinist *blackmail of a single alternative*." (Kolakowski's emphasis, p. 115.)

28. He says: "total inconsistency is tantamount in practice to fanaticism, while inconsistency is the source of tolerance." (Ibid., p. 230). Further on: "Inconsistency is simply a secret awareness of the contradictions of this world" (p. 231).

29. *Ibid*.

30. *Ibid*.

31. *Ibid*., p. 237.

32. Dominicé and Darcy, IDAC Document #8, p. 31. See note 49, Section 1.

33. Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972). The rules are spread throughout the Chapter "Of Means and Ends," pp. 24-47.

34. Alinsky's "have some-want more" leaves space for a materialist (self-interest) explanation on why the middle class (the have some-want more) may join the lot of the oppressed. We will see that he does not escape the idealist trap either. But at least, he does not fall into a sharp dichotomizing. His years as community organizer may have taught him that things are not always as clear-cut as we would like them to be. His classification appears in *Rules*, pp. 18-23.

35. William Griffith, "Utopian Perspective," p. 74.

36. Stated by Juan M. García-Passalacqua in "The Nature of Terrorism," *The San Juan Star*, Sept. 13, 1983, p. 25; and "FALN," *The San Juan Star*, July 9, 1983, p. 27.

37. Jim Walker, "The End of Dialogue," p. 150.

38. The last two examples are excerpts from personal letters sent by concerned practitioners to the author during 1983. Their names are not relevant for the purposes of this text.

39. See note 35 above. Griffith made a critique of Freire's "revolutionary program," pp. 74-77.

Section 3

WHO ARE WE?

It is necessary to qualify my use of the pronoun "we." It is not used as an academic plural nor it refers to everyone who uses Freire's ideas. It refers to a group mainly of Latinos in the United States and Puerto Rico who early in the seventies (and late sixties) individually discovered the Pedagogy of the Oppressed and were attracted to its educational philosophy. With one exception (a project that did engage in literacy work as its basic program, though not the only program), we were not so much attracted by Freire's literacy method, but by the educational practice of liberation and struggle against oppression implied by Freire's educational philosophy. The resonance of Freire in Puerto Rico was mostly felt by those of us who are persuaded that Puerto Rico is a Latin American country and thus resent its being an American colony. In the United States the overt reasons for Freire's popularity in this particular group were the racism and exploitation that are cruelly evident in all low-income communities.

We did not know much about Paulo Freire. Most of us were members of middle class families (even if some of us were, like myself, first-generation college students), and had been "achievers" in school. A few had doctoral degrees, but, for the most part, our highest degree was a Master's in Education, the Humanities or the Social Sciences. Including Anglos, there is still only one person with a Master's in Mathematics within the group that has continued working together. The initial group included a nun, an ex-nun, a political exile from Franco's Spain, a clinical psychologist and a consultant in education, all turned into educators-for-the-pedagogy-against-oppression. The group grew into a most heterogeneous network of more than 300 persons, all interested in, working with or just curious about Paulo Freire's ideas.

At a conscious level, the initial group shared a feeling that "something must be done." We felt indebted to the oppressed because we had been privileged, even if (and perhaps because) some of our families had been themselves oppressed and had "made it" within the system. We did not have a very clear as to where we were going or precisely what kind of change we wanted, but surely enough we wanted change.

Creating or joining private, non-profit organizations to work "in" the system seemed at that time to be a promising option.[1] This was made possible due to the massive amounts of federal funds for programs that were created by the government after the "troubled" sixties. Programs were there for almost anything. You only had to learn how to write proposals in "proposalese," the bureaucratic language needed to get funded. We either became profficient proposal writers, or got a hold of someone who was. By carefully wording and softening Freire's most radical contents we were able to obtain funds to develop a wide variety of programs. Instead of "oppressed," for instance, we used the phrase "low-income, undereducated adults." The pedagogy of the oppressed was called "non-traditional," "compensatory" or "alternative padagogy." If the program to which we were sending a proposal was known to be staffed by liberals, we would use "Third World" somewhere in the proposal. At that time, we could not see the strings attached to federal funding, and we all needed salaries. Learners in the programs we created came from the lowest sectors of the social strata and could not afford tuition fees. As a result, most institutions and programs became almost totally dependent upon federal funding. Even an institution which proudly declared itself to be an exception, after in-depth questioning was also found to be indirectly dependent upon federal funds, as its staff members received food stamps and all sorts of federal transfer payments for low-income individuals, to complement the subsistence salaries the institution paid. As of this writing the institution is no longer around.

Most of us chose to lead very simple personal lifestyles, regardless of income and place of residence. We were only a few individuals and became workaholics. There were no "bureaucracies" in our projects and, except for proposal writing and other specialized skills, all did a bit of everything, especially teaching or "facilitating" as we preferred to call our work. The absence of one person could easily deplete a project of needed staff. This led one of us to exclaim at a meeting: "How can we assist in the liberation of anyone, if we are slaves to liberating education?"

The "we" that I am trying to make alive through what, admittedly, may appear to be impressionistic descriptions, refers only to the beginnings of the encounter of a small group in the United States, which ocurred in 1978-79. Prior to bumping into each other, we were pretty much isolated individuals and small groups working for liberating education without knowing that there were other individuals and groups engaged in the same task. The development of what later on became a broad network, and the problems encountered in our practice, will be described later. What I have presented until now as an answer to the "Who are we," is, in my opinion, a naive cliché.

"Naive," if not uncritical, because for all the talk of class struggle and other Marxist terms, the question itself has never been asked by liberating educators in a non-idealistic framework. It is, indeed, a taboo to ask a question as simple as: "And what are your class or "self"-interests?" unless one is expected to listen to and accept a very ideal platitude or evasion. But we are not alone in this problem. Let us review three examples of answers to that question: those of Saul Alinsky, Byron Kennard and Karl Marx.

Saul Alinsky asserted that self-interest is the basis upon which humans operate:

> It appears shameful to admit that we operate on the basis of naked self interest, so we desperately try to reconcile every shift of circumstances that is to our self interest in terms of a broad moral justifica-

> tion or rationalization... We do not admit the actual fact: our own self interest. (Rules, p. 55)

What, then, we might rightfully ask, was Alinsky's self interest? Or that of his school of community organizers? Ah, my friend, there are exceptions:

> there is that wondrous quality of man that from time to time floods over the natural dams of survival and self-interest... these are the exceptions to the rule, but there has been enough of them flashing through the murky past of history to suggest that episodic transfigurations of the human spirit are more than the flash of fireflies. (Rules, pp. 58-59)

We have seen Freire explain that a member of the well-to-do commits "class suicide" to join the lot of the oppressed acting out of love, committing "class suicide." In my opinion, not very different from Alinsky's "transfiguration of the human spirit."

Byron Kennard, a community organizer with more than a decade of experience in the United States, has published a very interesting book entitled Nothing Can be Done, Everything is Possible.[2] Let us see how he deals with our question:

> Nature, in its bounty, seems to have programmed a few members of the human species to kick up a fuss at the first sign of oppression or abuse of authority... But nature is prudent as well as bountiful so it programmed a vastly larger number of individuals whose job it is to keep the lid on tight. (p. 1)

And, further on,

> What drives the organizers? Way down deep, I confess, the answer may be pure and simple resentment of authority. So what is the psychological motivation is pathetically plain to any greenhorn Freudian? So what if organizers are all trying to get even with their fathers? If nobody ever came along and stirred things up, everyone would live as serfs or slaves under the thumb of some despot. (p. 5)

How did Marx himself account for his own radicalization? If, as he stated, social being determines consciousness, how come he, as a member of the élite, opted for the cause of the proletarians?[3]

> "Through the contemplation of the situation of the working class" and through "a theoretical comprehension of history."

There is no way to avoid the elitism, the "we-are-something-special" feeling in all the above examples. No one, not even the most adamant historical materialist, seems to see a why beyond lofty ideals. It may be that, as Alvin Gouldner says happened to Marxists,[4] we liberating educators have reached the limits of our self-understanding. But Gouldner sees a way out and, for what it may be worth in terms of self-reflection, I will summarize his theory, apologizing for the necessarily sketchy way in which I must do it.

According to Alvin Gouldner, "we" would be representatives of a new class in history: the cultural (as opposed to monetary) burgeoisie.[5] Our "capital" is culture, the one we have acquired through our studies at precisely those "formal" educational institutions we criticize so much. There are two sides to the "we:" "intellectuals" and "technical intelligentsia." The terms "class" and "capital" are taken from Marx, and so justified by Gouldner, based upon Marx's texts, which, in Gouldner's terms presented a "fundamentally inadequate" scenario when defining the class struggle as one in which the protagonists were the proletariat and capitalist classes.[6]

The New Class made its début in the United States with Woodrow Wilson's administration and with the involvement of intellectuals in the Socialist and progressive movements that preceded it. The Cold War alienated the new class, who turned to fight its opponent, the monied class, in arenas such as academic freedom, protection of consumer rights, expertise in public policy development, reform movements for "honesty in government," the international ecology movement, and even women's liberation, about which Gouldner says:[7]

> some important part of it is not only an expression of resistance to the oppression of women-in-general

> but a demand by educated, middle class women for full membership rights in the New Class.

Because "no class goes to war without first seeking what it can secure through negotiations or threat, (...) one basic strategy of the New Class is to cultivate an alliance with a mass working class, proletariat or pesantry, to sharpen the conflict between that mass and the old class, and to direct that alliance against the old class and its hegemonic position in the old social order."[8]

Both the welfare state and the Socialist state are seen by Gouldner as political strategies of the cultural New Class, adding that in a Socialist state the hegemony of the New Class is greater. One of the public *ideologies* of the New Class is that of "professionalism" (let us remember that Ivan Illich described the "service" professions as "disabling professions"),[9] which is a "tacit claim by the New Class to technical and moral superiority over the old class," as well as "a bid for prestige *within* the established society" and a representation of the New Class as an *alternative* to the old. The New Class "is a cultural burgeoisie who appropriates privately the advantages of an historically and collectively produced cultural capital."[10]

I could go on and on with Gouldner's theory, which has a great deal of relevance to the taboo question in "progressive" and/or "Leftist" circles everywhere. It has much more richness of contents than what I have presented. But I will leave it here trusting that you can get the idea, which I will further illustrate with an anecdote of a conversation I heard some years ago.

It was a dialogue between a Marxist-Leninist party member and a typical formally undereducated self-made capitalist on their probable future in a revolution. The Communist comes from a well-to-do middle-class family, had studied in Europe and learned a very advanced medical specialization that is very scarce in the country. The capitalist had been exposed to hunger and to the cruelty of an urban ghetto since early childhood. He got out of it through sheer force (literally, not excluding violence), leaving school when he was in the eighth grade (public school) to help sustain his mother and brothers while working in the docks for 25 cents an hour, twelve hours a day. They were neighbors.

Capitalist: Have you ever experienced hunger?

Communist: You know I haven't.

Capitalist: And now you have a very valuable profession, right? What will your financial situation be if your revolution triumphs? You will be in high demand, because there are only a few with your skills. Besides, you are a party member and surely that also will be rewarded. But, what will I be?

Communist: Your experience in organizing dock workers could be very valuable in workers' syndicates after the revolution.

Capitalist: You must be joking! What syndicates, under a Communist system? By definition, workers are no longer oppressed in a Communist society. Our struggle was collective bargaining and there is no such thing in your desired society. Come on, let us be honest! Guys like you will be at the top and guys like me will be at the bottom, after my properties are expropriated and some do-nothing party-credentialled guy is rewarded with my house. Not while I am alive. You will have to kill me first, because I love this land as much as you do, and will not become an exile.

(END OF DIALOGUE)

We must start with people where they are, Freire frequently says.[11] Do we honestly think the capitalist will be changed through dialogue with a middle-class person, class suicide and all? Or is he "the enemy" with which, according to Freire, dialogue is not possible? At least, during more years than our Communist friend, even before the Communist was born and until he purportedly committed "class suicide" the now capitalist was, indeed, part of the people, and very much oppressed to bout. The Communist, as you may have gathered, I believe to be a member of the New Class. He was never oppressed.

What do we do in situations like this? Who are we, anyway, and what moves us? What do we believe in? Are we members of the New Class? Or just kind, loving people prepared to give everything, including our lives, for the oppressed? And, do we know what we are talking about when we talk about poverty and oppression? How many of us have experienced it (not as an act of will, to have the experience, but *because there was no other* choice)?

In this context, let us listen to what Dianne Ravitch[12] has to say about "radicals." Summarizing Michael Katz (*Class, Bureaucracy and the Schools*), Ravitch establishes that, as educators became self-consciously professional "they turned inwards and built a narrow world of their own; shielded by their self-righteous, salvationist, reformist rhetoric, they lost the capacity either to accept criticism or to criticize themselves." Have "we" the "new wave" of liberating educators fallen into this particular trap?

Again, quoting Katz:[13]

> I suspect that what the poor want for their children is affluence, status, and a house in the suburbs, rather than community, a guitar and soul. They may prefer schools that teach their children to read and write and cipher rather than to feel and to be. If this is the case, then an uncomfortable piece of reality must be confronted: *educational radicalism is itself a species of class activity*. It reflects an attempt at cultural imposition fully as much as the traditional educational emphasis on competition, restraint, and orderliness, whose burgeois bias radicals are quick to excoriate. (My emphasis.)

It has been our field experience that, while we wanted to develop critical consciousness with learners, *they* wanted a high school diploma, or to learn English as a second language; and very rapidly, to get a job.[14] They did not have the time or the inclination for other "critical" subjects. And if you said that a diploma was "not important," after silence was broken through trust, a learner would be quick to say: "Not important for you. How many do you have?"

Addressing those of us who have critiqued past education reformers, and who have either been engaged in (or accepted) a radical revision of schooling, Ravitch asks:[15]

> If reformers in the past have been power-hungry, manipulative and devious, why trust reformers in the present? If past reforms have served hidden 'vested interest' rather than the people, why assume beneficial consequences from present reforms? If class connections are so compelling what are we to make of the radical revisionists themselves, all of whom are, by professional status and income, members of the same upper middle class group that has traditionally led reform movements?

Ravitch tackles head-on a major dilemma "we" seldom confront"[16]

> One of the most perplexing dilemmas for radical critics is whether to stress liberty or equality as the most important end for society. Most of them simply ignore the tension between the two values and assume that it is possible to have a society and a kind of schooling where both liberty and equality are maximized, while bureaucracy and administrative systems are minimized if not eliminated altogether.

Ravitch is persuaded that "revolutionary egalitarianism cannot be achieved without extensive political and social controls."[17] I think "we" are not in agreement with Ravitch on that one, but we do have doubts. What is Ravitch's judgement of those "who propose radical egalitarianism"? Well, she thinks that we value equality more than we value liberty or efficiency because, in her opinion, full egalitarianism "could only be achieved by establishing a powerful state bureaucracy capable of constantly monitoring the redistribution of money, jobs and other rewards... the creation of a new class of bureaucrats in the theoretically classless society."[18]

The above may irritate the reader, but I do think it merits some thoughts. Over the past year (1983), there has been a very strong movement in our network away from the Soviet system, which is increasingly called "state capitalism" by many.[19] Although we never talk openly in front of "the enemy"[20] many have stated in private conversations that they ("we") could never surrender our intellectual freedom to criticize what "is not right." The issue of whether freedom and equality are mutually exclusive values has never been dealt with adequately by the Left. Yes, you can be free to die of hunger under a bridge, or of cold in winter because you cannot afford heating expenses. That, we all agree, is not freedom. But are there "freedoms" that most of us are not prepared to surrender? Which? And how does all this relate to our role in the struggle for liberation and empowerment? Could this issue of freedom or equality be one of the situations that could justify Kolakowski's view of the right not to choose? But then, Freire says that not choosing is equivalent to side with the oppressor; that no one is neutral. If you ("we") do not choose, we are "the enemy." Or are we?

Gouldner says that a paradox of the New Class is that it (we?) is both elitist and emancipatory.[21] I think that our elitism cannot be denied, no matter how much we try to deny it. Because elitism is more than an attitude. It also has to do with the place (or role) we have in our particular societies.

An answer to the questions "Who are 'we'?" and "What motivates us?" it seems to me, is crucial in any attempt at evaluating our work in Freire-inspired programs. We should not avoid an examination of our personal histories, our class position, our jobs, our salaries, our zone of residence, and why (and how) all these "fit" or do not fit with our overt and perhaps not so overt objectives. Freire's theory does not provide for this type of analysis. It may be beautiful to think that we are (1) acting out of love, (2) non-elitist, (3) prepared to commit "class suicide," and (4) prepared to learn from the learners, who we consider our equals in a common quest for effective ways to fight against oppression and create a new world. Beautiful, but, is it true?

Bookish definitions for all vague terms, taken right out of Freire's books have been abundant. But the problem of how to use them, once in the farmworkers fields, public housing projects, the streets and the non-classrooms we created in the United States, was left untouched. Each had to invent his/her way at each site, not without a great deal of ideological and power struggle within each site. Ultimately, "we" represented a very heterogeneous group of self-appointed rebels (or radicals) that in three years could not agree upon a single definition upon which to act collectively.[22]

Notes to Section 3: Who Are We?

1. In and within are not the same. We used to say we were "within." To work "within" you have to reach the inner sanctum of the system. Very few Latinos have achieved that.

2. (Andover, Mass.: Buck House Publishing Company, 1982).

3. Quoted by Alvin Gouldner in, The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 58.

4. Alvin Gouldner, The Two Marxisms (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

5. Gouldner's "New Class" (see note 3 above), should not be confused with that of Milovan Djilas' in The New Class. An Analysis of the Communist System (New York, 1957) or in The Unperfect Society. Beyond the New Class (New York, 1969). Djilas refers to the already entrenched bureaucracy in the Soviet Union and other socialist states. Gouldner's new class, the way I see it, would be the class contending for power against the one identified by Djilas.

6. We would do well to examine whether all revolutions are a civil war among different sectors of the elite, particularly, in Alinsky's terms, between the "haves" and the "have some-want more."

7. Gouldner, New Class, p. 17.

8. Ibid.

9. Ivan Illich, Toward a History of Needs (New York: Bantam, 1980).

10. Gouldner, New Class, p. 19.

11. See my transcription of "A Dialogue with Freire" in Educación Liberadora (E.L.), January 1982, pp. 6-10, in which Freire says: "It is very important to stress that we must start where the students are, with their own perception of reality, their own level of knowledge, not with one's. (...) It is impossible to start from my side of things" (p. 7). E.L. was a newsletter published in English between Sept. 1980 and Nov. 1982, to connect practitioners of Freire's ideas in the United States and Puerto Rico. A total of eighteen issues were published. These are still available from: Alternativas, P.O. Box 424, Señorial Mail Station, Río Piedras, Puerto Rico 00926. In the Jan. 1982 issue , I provided a transcription of a Seminar/Dialogue which took place in the Spanish Educational Development (SED) Center, Washington, D.C., December 11, 1981.

12. Dianne Ravitch, The Revisionists Revised. A Critique of the Radical Attack on the Schools (New York: Basic Books, 1978), p. 118.

13. Ibid., p. 124.

14. See my article, "The Emergence of a Liberating Education Project," in Educación Liberadora, December 1980, pp. 15-17.

15. Ravitch, Revisionists Revisited, p. 167.

16. Ibid., p. 155.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., p. 98.

19. The idea is that the State becomes all powerful, stifling dissent and appropriating the surplus value of the workers' labor to invest it as the State pleases. The workers may have no say at all in the way the surplus value is invested.

20. There is really no way to know who or where is "the enemy" of liberating education. The paranoid and at the same time naive way in which "the enemy" is seen, in my opinion, has prevented us from entering into dialogues with persons critical of our theory and/or practices. If we only talk to those who agree with us, are not we following a dangerously uncritical path?

21. Gouldner, New Class, p.84.

22. This section is mostly written in the past tense. This does not mean that all the fieldwork based upon Freire has ended. The use of the past tense is due to the fact that I am engaged in a retrospective look at what transpired between 1979-1983. There are still many users of Freire's ideas in the United States, even some of those who integrated the "we" about which I talk here. However, many liberating education projects did not survive Reaganomics and/or their own internal theoretical/practical weaknesses. Projects that did survive are for the most part, again working isolated from each other, trying to make ends meet and wondering if they will still be around next year. As of this writing, many individuals (not projects) are still connected by a network and exchanging by means of the newsletter Alternativas. This is described in the next section.

Section 4

WHAT DID WE DO?

On the previous section, I stated in general terms some characteristics of those of us who, during the seventies, created what we wanted to be a pedagogy with (not for) the oppressed. We called it liberating education.[1] I have established that we were guided by Freire's books; and by an expressed conviction that there is oppression in the United States (of which racism is only a part). We were also persuaded that the "traditional" (and even most of the non-traditional) educational programs in the United States either had given up or had not really tried to create and provide relevant educational services for (much less with) the oppressed. We decided to try.

There were vast differences among the ways in which we tried; there was an immense variety in the educational programs and activities we created to work with the oppressed. They included Spanish literacy programs, ESL classes, adult basic education, GED preparation classes, pre-college programs, college programs at the 2- and 4-year levels; the use of theatre, clowning, massage and other non-verbal educational tools; childbirth classes; labor education programs; parenting programs; and college re-entry programs for middle-aged women, to name only a few.[2]

Our institutional base was summarized as follows in November 1981:[3]

> We are all private, non-profit organizations working at the grassroots level in urban and rural geographical areas where Latinos are concentrated. We do not own fancy or expensive physical facilities, equipment, libraries, audio visual or computer centers. We are by no means financially secure. A doctoral degree would be more an exception than a rule in the paper credentials of our staff. We cannot afford Ph. D. salaries. Most of the learners in our projects cannot pay tuition, and because most institutions are not accredited, students are not eligible for financial aid. Our revenues are extremely limited.

The learners in our programs were a predominantly Latino population, although some projects worked with Black and heterogeneous (Black, Latino, Oriental) populations. With few exceptions, learners were adults; those described by the United States educational system as "non-traditional," "deprived," or "disadvantaged." We rejected all those labels. In occupational terms, the learners could have been unemployed, or seasonally employed. They included recent immigrants and regular migrants. The immense majority of them lived under poverty level in either urban or rural areas.

They wanted to learn and they worked hard at learning what they needed. They were most emphatically not, as "the system" often states or implies, lazy, ignorant losers. It may seem that way, within a self-serving definition of competency or survival, which conveniently turns into self-fulfilling prophesy.

A set of beliefs (even if locally defined at each site) was deemed to be the starting point in all programs. These were to be translated into a set of concrete actions. Thus I called them "practiced beliefs." There were:

- we are all humans, and therefore, equals in our human dignity; we are all worthy of respect, and we are all knowledgeable. Because living is learning, we all have learned a lot. We may not have learned the same things but everyone surely has a lot to teach others.[4]

- all of us, including "administrators" can be learners and teachers at the same time, if a process to do so is created. Specialized functions in a hierarchical organizational structure are not compatible with our views.[5]

- the organanizational process of an educational institution is as important as the contents of its educational programs. In fact, the process is a type of contents—what some have called the hidden curriculum of the educational system. We must constantly examine with learners the process of education and administration in our institutions.[6]

We probably shared the same ideals that are voiced by the traditional educational system, but we believed ourselves to be different: we acted upon the ideals and strived to translate them into concrete actions. Our rationale for this was:

> you cannot teach freedom to a captive audience, you cannot teach equality when the teacher or board member is above and hierarchically separated from the students. You cannot in honesty evaluate the work of others if you are not prepared to be evaluated by them. You cannot teach democracy by means of undemocratic processes.[7]

The way to avoid falling into the trap of saying without doing was, what I now believe to be the adoption of a superficial interpretation of democracy as a participatory process with which we would reflect with learners about all institutional activities.[8]

We deemed attitudes and emotions to be of utmost importance:[9]

> We do not separate emotions and feelings from words and action. We reject the affective/cognitive dichotomy and take into consideration these domains, looking at how they are expressed in words and actions. And this we do with everyone: students, teachers and administrators. We examine the cognitive and affective domains in words and action on a one-to-one basis, but also in group situations. We do it by means of open dialogues and what some would call exercises in group dynamics. Body language and non-verbal communication are important for us. We disagree strongly among ourselves and anger, like any other feelings, is considered okay, as long as it is acknowledged or pointed out in a dialogue, to examine it as a part of a process.

We frowned at "academia" because we felt it implied something that is separated from the common sense, day-to-day concerns of the learner. Not only separated, but above and beyond these concerns. Which was, in our opinion, the major reason why learners often failed to learn in "academic" environments while they learned easily in the environment we created with them.

Our preferred mode of learning was collective or group learning. Most of us emphasized collective learning, as opposed to individualized instruction. We felt very strongly that the basis of power is found in collective, rather than individual actions.[10] That is why we tried to emphasize the participation of learners in decision-making, frowning upon distinctions between "academic" and "administrative" matters as if these were isolated entities.

As for curriculum, in addition to considering the process of education as an inherent part of the contents, we tried to make the day-to-day, common sense concerns of the learners the basis upon which we constructed, with them, a curriculum. We wanted it to be a cross-disciplinary (or interdisciplinary) curriculum that could change every year, based upon the needs of the learners, as perceived by us with all of them. We tried to avoid the pressure of prescribed contents that we had to cover in "X" period of time. We were concerned with effective teaching and learning. The pressure to cover prescribed contents, in our opinion, prevented both.

We truly believed the following to be the product of our efforts:

> Within our programs, the learners come out of the culture of silence; out of the fatalism and apparent docility; out of their self-devaluation. And they develop a sense of power based upon a critical understanding of the concrete conditions of their existence in this country. They realize that these conditions can and should be changed; that they can do something to this effect.
>
> This cannot be the result of traditional teaching, which is conceived as a process whereby a knowledgeable person deposits contents into the head of an ignorant person. Empowerment cannot result from this type of activity in which the process is telling learners that they are powerless and ignorant while the contents say otherwise.
>
> Teaching and education in general, including the administration of educational institutions, is conceived as something different. An education of quality then would be seen as an unfinished process: the process of learning how we can best learn together

> as equals and with dignity what we all decide it is important to learn, so that we can be empowered to act, to change and therefore to transform our world into a place in which it will be easier to be human and to love.

As stated in note 3 for this section, all the information I have provided thus far is excerpted from a presentation I was asked to make by a major funding agency. I knew very well that what I was to say was not exactly what "the system" wanted to hear, but I went along with my planned presentation anyway. As of 1984 I must admit that the statements presented in 1981 only offered our ideals, our shoulds, what we wished our programs to be.

In 1981 I had already discovered the enormous gap which separated us from our funding sources, and had realized that a "confrontation" was inevitable. Further, we were going to lose (our funding, that is) unless we opted to defeat ourselves by accepting money to do what we did not want to do.[11] In our situation, funding would be a self-defeating victory. A decision had to be taken both individually and within each project.

I had made mine. The Reagan administration was into "quality" and "excellence" in education, and we were far from being considered "excellent" by the system. Consequently, in the presentation I was asked to offer I started by denouncing "the definitions game:"

> The definitions game is an obstacle to communications which leads us to a dead end. "What is quality?" we can ask, and after a long discussion we will either draft a definition that is so general that it is meaningless , or we will come up with as many definitions as there are persons. And where do we go from here? The definitions game can take us straight into a need to define even the concepts we have used in our definition. But that would not tell us much about what we can actually do to promote effective teaching and learning. I dare say that perhaps definitions are not as helpful as we often think they are!

Further on, I lashed against another "favorite" of the system by saying that we were not into "the numbers game," although sponsoring agencies sometimes required that we enter it:

> How many do you recruit? How many do you enroll? How many do you graduate? Our quest is not quantity, but quality. It should be evident by now that, if we were to construe a definition of quality in liberating education, its elements would greatly differ from the accepted, standard criteria, which are basically quantitative.

Our collective work, which a group of seven project directors had strived to sustain since 1978-79 was about to end its federally-funded stage. We could sense it. A change of administration had taken place in the government of the United States and it was not inclined to assist the grassroots. As I stated to a group of about 75 liberating educators in the only national conference we ever held:[12]

> The only reason why we are here today is because we have not forgotten, because we have followed-up. And we have to do it again if we want to continue working together. That is for you to decide, for you to do.
>
> IRCEL is only an instrument for your use. But IRCEL needs you to use it on behalf of all not only for the sake of your own institutions. We need to go beyond the narrow confines of our barrios and to reach out to compañeros in other barrios. It takes all of us to do it.

IRCEL (Information and Resources Center for Educación Liberadora —liberating education—) had two beginnings. "Officially" it started in September, 1980 when we received a federal grant to finance it. Unofficially, however, it started in 1978 when a group of representatives from some Hispanic Liberating Education projects surprised each other at a conference in Wisconsin. It was a Projects Directors' meeting convened by a federal funding agency. I had been working with a group of Freire-inspired educators in Puerto Rico,[13] trying to discover through practice and based upon Freire's theories, a relevant alternative for the education of urban low-income adults. I had submitted a proposal requesting financial support for our efforts. We received a three-year grant and that is how I found myself, as an evaluator, in a Projects Directors' meeting.

To our dismay, we felt alienated, we felt that we did not belong there. We naturally moved to see if there were other Latinos in the conference with which we could communicate. We found people from two projects: one in New York and one in Oregon. We all discovered that what we were doing was very similar, although we were working in very different *barrios*. We learned that we were not alone, and that knowledge gave us some energy to go on.[14] When the meeting ended, however, we went back to our projects and we did not follow-up. You know how it is: practitioners seldom have the time to do these things.

In 1979 there was *another* Projects Directors' meeting. And by then there were seven Latino projects doing what each described as "liberating education." By this time, all were feeling an urgency to communicate with each other, but to communicate *without the limitations of a conference that had little to do* with what we were doing. We just *had* to meet again, with an agenda prepared by us, for us.[15]

One of the projects had received more money than it had requested, by mistake of the funding agency. This project asked the funding agency to allow us to use this extra money to convene an Hispanic Mini-Caucus to discuss common concerns. Permission was granted. It was January, 1980.

I had moved from Puerto Rico to the United States to accept a job in the State of Virginia, and had prepared a proposal requesting assistance to create a network of Latino Adult Education Projects. I participated in the Mini-Caucus as an observer and recorder.[16]

The Caucus was held to see if we could take steps to work together *regardless* of the outcome of the proposal I had written. The seven projects worked intensively for two days. What follows is what we came up with as results:

1. We drafted a list of common problems and concerns.
2. We agreed that I would use the research facilities of the institution that employed me to identify

more Latino Adult Education Projects which were using the ideas and methods of Paulo Freire in the United States.

3. We agreed that, if we could find at least six more projects that were doing what we were doing, we would make a special unsolicited request for funds to the agency that already was funding some projects, to hold a Mini-Conference in New York, sometime in the summer of 1980.

4. We agreed to file a report to the funding agency with these results.

By the month of June 1980 (three months after the caucus), twenty-four projects had been identified and contacted. The funding agency approved an unsolicited proposal to convene the proposed Mini-Conference in New York in July 1980. All 24 projects participated. In the Mini-Conference we learned everything we could about each project, exchanged materials, and identified common problems. We agreed on a tentative wording for the meaning for our programs, drafted collectively.[17] It read as follows:

1. Educación liberadora (liberating education) takes place in different settings.

2. Educación liberadora is the participatory practice of education that maintains that education is political.

3. Educación liberadora is an educational process that begins by making people aware of themselves and their surroundings and, as human beings, to develop a critical consciousness.

4. Liberación (liberation) is defined as the empowerment of participants and the giving-up of power of the facilitator.[18]

5. Educación liberadora fits into two practical applications (conscientization and literacy), but these cannot occur separately.[19]

6. Each of us [present in New York] is working in a liberating setting, whether it be applied directly in a "schooling" sense, or a "non-schooling" sense such as with youth programs and in the fields of music and art.

7. The following were identified as commonalities that united us:

    - We consider that dialogue is a starting point in *educación liberadora*.
    - *Educación liberadora* is the empowerment of the people.[20]
    - *Liberación* must go hand in hand with providing the people with skills that will help them in their immediate situation.[21]
    - *Educación liberadora* is "de-schooling."[22]
    - *Educación liberadora* occurs predominantly in community settings.
    - *Liberación* is cultural identity.[23]
    - *Educación liberadora* does not discard theory or practice. On the contrary, both theory and practice are utilized dialectically.
    - The existence, strength and development of *educación liberadora* should go hand in hand with the exchange and sharing of ideas and materials among us.[24]
    - In order to accomplish this, a mechanism has to be established.[25]

It was decided that, if the proposal I had submitted was funded, I would undertake the networking and resources sharing tasks which all projects needed, but for which no project had time or staff.

The proposal was funded and IRCEL was born based at the Latino Institute Research Division in Reston, Virginia. It operated from September, 1980 to September, 1982, when the Institute gave notice that its operations in Virginia would be closed. I requested and obtained the safekeeping of the materials collected by IRCEL, notified all projects, and looked for a way to continue the networking we needed, this time *without* federal monies.[26]

A progressive church granted seed monies for this effort and a "new" network called *Alternativas* was born, staffed by unemployed volunteers in

February, 1983.[27] Its major networking vehicle is a newsletter that is still being published.[28]

IRCEL had two major tasks to undertake during its final federally-funded year of 1982-83: two documents had to be prepared, to assist practitioners in two areas which had been identified as presenting the biggest problems to all projects engaged in liberating education:

- Formation of facilitators (teachers).
- Evaluation of Liberating Education programs.

The first document was produced in 1982, printed and mailed in 1983.[29] The second document is the one you are now reading.

Notes to Section 4: What Did we Do?

1. Some called it liberatory education. As of this writing, the label "liberating education" is not much in use. It has evolved into "education for empowerment," and "popular" (or people's) education.

2. A total of 28 projects came together in 1981. An IRCEL 1981 Descriptive Directory of Projects was produced to provide an overview of how liberating education was operationalized across the United States and Puerto Rico. See page 54 of the essay for a description of IRCEL.

3. The information and quotes provided on pages 49 to 54 are excerpted from a presentation I made at the Fund for the Improvement of Post-secondary Education (FIPSE), Annual Project Directors' Meeting, Columbia, Maryland, November 1981. It was entitled, "The Meaning of Quality Education in IRCEL: A Democratic Approach Towards Effective Teaching and Learning," and was published in Educación Liberadora, December 1981, pp. 10-13.

4. This position is fairly close to the personalist or populist approach, as it ignores class differences.

5. This belief was perhaps the hardest to practice. Specialized functions sometimes are required by the system (such as check signing and submission of financial reports to the IRS) and some are essential for institutional survival (such as proposal-writing and fund-raising). Also, project founders and old timers could not avoid a certain love-hate from newcomers, which was based on the charisma that project founders and directors seemed to have.

6. This was a major concern because, for the most part, learners resisted to spend their time in anything that would take them away from their immediate, survival-oriented and practical objectives. Further, part-time staff members could not invest a great deal of time in meetings and more meetings, even though they did (for the most part) work for more hours than they were paid for.

7. Again, learners resisted an experience with which they were not familiar. In some instances they demanded "real" teachers, homework and the discipline of a traditional school.

8. We wanted "participatory" instead of "representative" democracy. This meant that all were expected to participate equally in deliberations prior to decision-making, and that decisions were to be taken by consensus instead of by majority vote. Any other style brought instant accusations of "authoritarianism," and/or dogmatism. Participation became an end in itself. Participation for what? To

practice "democracy." Yet, when rapid decisions were needed for action, the preferred process did not seem to work. It always entailed an enormous amount of time.

9. This was certainly true—and time consuming. An impact of group dynamics, no doubt. It is fascinating to read Emanuel de Kadt's statements in *Catholic Radicals in Brazil*, on how powerfully Catholic university students were impacted by group dynamics, in the early sixties, much in the same way *we* were in the late seventies. Another (unknown) attraction to Freire's educational philosophy? See de Kadt, pp. 215-18.

10. The philosophy and practice that we developed tried to be as non-directive as possible. I think that without realizing it, we moved from using non-directiveness *as a means* to using it as *a goal* in itself. How non-directive can you be in insisting in non-directiveness? The question only came up in the only large conference we ever held (October, 1981 in Reston, Virginia). Reading Emanuel de Kadt, I could not help but remembering that conference. Some of the problems posed by de Kadt, which we also faced, were: (a) a tension between the requirement for efficiency and the requirement to have a minimum of authority from the top; (b) extreme non-directiveness was forcefully proclaimed mostly by those who were not in a position of ultimate administrative responsibility; (c) any kind of structure was resented as manipulation; (d) newcomers did not have an understanding of what our work was about, and a great deal of time had to be spent in clarifying this matter; (e) voices of dissent dominated the proceedings. As de Kadt, I concluded that "the result was a truly awful muddle, a complete lack of clarity as to any decisions about the future that might come about" from the conference. *Catholic Radicals*, pp. 222-25. See Eva Díaz' account of the liberating education conference in "A Vision Being Formed: the Dynamics of the Conference," *Educación Liberadora*, October-November, 1981, pp. 4-5; and Sarah Hirrschman's "Recollection," same issue of *Educación Liberadora*, pp. 20-28.

11. I recall that computers and advanced educational technology were "in." Some liberating education projects took that road. Most, however, refused to consider that type of activity as a priority. It was quite expensive to implement, it required specialized staff, etc. We were dismayed by the priorities expressed by the Reagan administration, in which we clearly did not "fit."

12. This is the conference to which I refer in note 10 above. The quote is taken from my "Opening Remarks," which came after two days of interaction during which I had sensed the issues mentioned in note 10. The conference participants included a considerable number of "newcomers." Many directors of projects could not attend due to the emergencies (mostly financial) faced by the projects, and sent other staff members to represent them. I felt the need to "tell the story" of our collective work, to no avail. The agenda, carefully planned

collectively, but by project directors over the phone and mail, was disrupted under the banner of non-directiveness. Members of our funding agency were present. The situation was hopeless.

13. Project D.A.R.E. (Discovering Alternatives for Relevant Education), created in 1978 with a grant from FIPSE (see note 3 above). It was located in a public urban housing project in San Juan, Puerto Rico. I was in charge of "process evaluation." D.A.R.E. was one of the projects which helped me start IRCEL when I moved to the United States in 1980.

14. We had discovered, through trial and error, that liberating education was easier said than done, as the saying goes. It was an exhausting and very frustrating endeavor. All our premises had been proved false by the learners. We were caught into the unexpected situation of being required (by the learners) to do the very things we had decided not to do. And, as Freire advised, we had started with learners, where they were at, hoping to move along, with them, to where we wanted to go. They knew better, though, and refused "our" way.

15. The urgency was serious. We needed to learn how others were coping with reality; to find out if we were crashing against reality or were just being incompetent; perhaps we were looking for a "magic" solution!

16. The problems and concerns expressed at the Mini-Caucus were integrated into a document I prepared and mailed to all participants. Problems and concerns were amazingly similar in all projects.

17. A careful transcript of proceedings was made based upon notes taken throughout the interaction. These were mailed by the host institution to all participants.

18. The movement towards non-directiveness is clearly expressed by this statement.

19. Conscientization, a term much discussed and defined (and, incidentally a term which originated within ISEB; see page 4), was the immediate objective of liberating education. This we all realized. The objective responded, we believed, to a long-range goal: the structural transformation of society. The problem was that no one knew how conscientization could be "practically applied" in the United States context. We were learning by doing.

20. This was a medium-range goal. Empowerment was needed before structural changes.

21. This was an immediate objective, as learners demanded it.

22. We were much influenced by Ivan Illich, as evidenced in this commonality.

23. Freire's emphasis on cultural action was more than well-received by Latinos, who struggle in the United States to safeguard their cultural identity. The question of whose culture (that of élite or that of oppressed Latinos) never came up in this meeting.

24. We truly wanted to learn from each other, among projects, to face the challenges that our practice was posing to our theory.

25. In addition to what will be described in this section, interesting experiments, such as staff exchanges, were conducted. Educación Liberadora, the newsletter which connected us between 1980-82, is the best source on the mechanisms that were tried in this quest.

26. Federal funding, I had decided, was self-defeating. I undertook the task to continue networking efforts through volunteer work. By then, many of us were unemployed and, while searching for a job, some joined efforts to keep in touch with all who wanted to try.

27. A private, non-profit entity was created called Alternative Solutions, Inc. (ASI). This entity operated between October, 1982 and May, 1983 when it was dissolved. Its assets were transferred to Puerto Rico, for the project Alternativas (the new network), sponsored by the Puerto Rican Center for Lifelong Studies. The church approved the dissolution and transfer, and has pledged to support the operations of the network until December, 1985.

28. The newsletter is entitled Alternativas.

29. Phyllis Noble, Formation of Freirian Facilitators (Latino Institute, Chicago, July, 1983).

Section 5

WORKING IN THE SYSTEM

Liberating education in the United States as seen by practitioners unfolded within a hostile environment. The assumptions of liberating education about the illness of the United States society, as well as its prescriptions for health, are deemed to be in absolute contradiction with those of the power structures in the country. The ultimate goal in the theory of United States liberating education, the ideal, is to be politicized with learners for a structural transformation of the society. It is not to reform the system in order to make it work better. Liberating educators are theoretically persuaded that reforms will not bring about social justice. Reforms are using a band-aid to stop a hemorrage.

At the same time, liberating educators realized that "revolution"[1] is not even close in the United States, and that structural transformation is a long, uphill path. To a great extent, the attraction felt by U.S. progressives towards Freire's educational philosophy is based upon Freire's optimism. In the face of writings such as Marcuse's One Dimensional Man,[2] which almost defeats from the start any intent at transformation by defining the system as all-powerful, Freire's insistence on hope, on doing what is possible, on being utopic by denouncing and announcing a better world, on not giving up, was a welcomed relief and inspiration for many defeated "radicals" of the sixties. In a debate with Ivan Illich at the World Council of Churches in Geneva (1974), Freire had stated:[3]

> The fact... that certain given historical circumstances in which educators find themselves do not allow them to participate more actively in the process of the revolutionary transformation of society does not mean that their more limited effort is worthless, since this will be the effort that, for them, is historically viable. In history one does what is historically possible and not what one would like to do.

The optimism we found in Freire led us to adopt his educational philosophy in a most uncritical manner: unplanned and spontaneously enthusiastic. We did not fully realize that, even if in fact there is a Third World within the United States, its conditions would be very different from those of the Third World out of the United States. Yes, we were aware of the fact that the United States is not Brazil and that there was a lot to learn. We were also aware of what Ivan Illich called "the modernization of poverty;"[4] that poverty in the United States is a subsidized poverty; and suspected that this would make our work much more difficult. But someone had to try, to search for an effective way to help out those who needed it most. The conditions of our people in the United States were so bad that we could not possibly make them worse. Alternatives were needed and we were prepared to discover them, in process. One proposal to the federal government stated just that (though in careful proposalese): "let us try something different, because the educational system has failed. We do not know if it will work but, do you have a better idea?" We were given a three-year grant to find out if something could be done.[5]

I must strongly disagree with David Reed, who states that Latino groups in various parts of the United States tried to implement Freire's literacy method and concluded "that the Freire technique is irrelevant to the people of North America."[6] (My emphasis.) In the pursuit of accuracy, I must state that we did not see Freire's educational philosophy as a source for a literacy "method" or "technique." As stated, out of 24 Latino projects I dealt with, only two had literacy programs, and of these only one tried to replicate Freire's method. We were not in search of a literacy technique, but of a total overhaul, both in the process and contents of adult education in the United States. Our stand was that as long as there is oppression in the United States, Freire would be relevant, at least at the theoretical level, but that practices for the United States had to be discovered in the United States based upon the realities of a complex, technologically-advanced industrial society tnat no one had succeeded at explaining.

Reed accepted my criticism through correspondence, but his book is still around. Thus, I feel it necessary to include his response:[7]

> The criticism you raise about the quote in the book is a valid one. It should not read as a general criticism of Latin educators! It does, however, and as such is inaccurate (...) The real problem with the way the quote in the book reads is that it does not point out the many experiences led by Latino educators that have made very significant contributions to developing the concepts and practice of liberating education. The error stands to be corrected.

This minor disagreement with Reed is only an example of a series of frictions which took place between elite members of minority groups who where "inventing their way through" the application of Freire's pedagogy, right there in the field, and what they saw as mostly "WHITE" or "ANGLO" academicians who argued endlessly about the meaning and accuracy of Freire's theoretical formulations. We also argued endlessly. But we saw ourselves as "doers" and "them" as "talkers." We became separatists: a great gap developed between the Latino grassroots and all university-based people, Latino and Anglo alike. We felt that Freire was "used" as the subject of many publications and dissertations written by academics who were only moved by the publish-or-perish syndrome on behalf of their professional advancement. "Our" quest was felt as an endless, frustrating endeavor to make sense out of what we were learning in the field as compared with what Freire wrote.[8]

Latinos and other minorities at the grassroots seldom found the time nor had the inclination to write about their experiences. That was seen as a "luxury." I consider that attitude as a serious mistake. Those that did write refused, for the most part, to share with people out of their programs what they had written, the stated reason being that others would be inclined to "copy" instead of creating their own processes and materials.[9]

The issue came into the first[10] open conflict during the conference with Freire sponsored by the University of Vermont, in Burlington in 1981.

News about the forthcoming conference spread and about 15 Latinos representing many projects in the liberating education network managed to get there. We were the only cohesive group in the conference and found that the program for the conference was contradictory to the practice of liberating education as we understood it.[11] Latinos caucused at night, at the end of the first session and opted to act in two ways: (1) to request from Freire a separate small group session, in the Spanish language, and (2) to request from the program organizers an opportunity to dialogue with other participants about what we were doing, as opposed to seeing films, listening to presentations and interrogating Freire about his thoughts in question-and-answer sessions. The organizers accepted our suggestion, provided a room for us and announced that dialogue sessions among participants would be open as an alternative to the structured program. The sessions we conducted attracted many non-Latino conference participants who expressed surprise at the realization that there were many projects already doing things to use Freire's educational philosophy (not just engaged in literacy) with the population for which it was intended.[12] Some naively declared us "experts." But this was an exception.

Our work always went, and is to this date, unrecognized in the larger world of the United States academia. Many useful results based upon field experience have been lost because of the resistance of practitioners to reflect in writing (much less to tape dialogue sessions), about what was being done. However, the problems posed by those who have published books (or written articles and dissertations) about the practices of liberating education in the United States are not very different from what I learned in close interaction with at least 10 of the 24 Latino projects that at one time integrated the liberating education network, and with many "isolated practitioners:" educators who tried, in their classrooms, to do something to transform the process and contents of their educational experiences with students.

The work that, by far, I consider the best analysis of the practice of liberating (the author calls it liberatory) education in the United

States has been written and published by Ira Shor.[13] Another (unpublished) work which is very valuable is Tom Heaney's doctoral dissertation.[14] Each must be looked at in context.

Ira grew up in the South Bronx as a son of a working-class family and was selected out of his world "as part of the fraction of worker-kids to be tracked on to the university," based upon his I.Q. scores. This he calls his first "class suicide:"[15] rising through the school system, erasing his worker background, and becoming a university intellectual. Yet, "in an ironic way," says Ira, he returned to the people he grew up with:[16]

> After a university education, I taught Open Admissions students for six years at Staten Island Community College.

Ira writes from the perspective of an individual faculty member who tried to do something with working-class learners admitted to college under the Open Admissions experiment conducted (and defeated) in the City of New York. His book is both theoretical and practical: he reflects upon the obstacles encountered in the larger United States society by those who try to practice liberating education, and shares what he did, how he did it and why.

Tom was born "of second generation middle class Irish parents with strong familial ties to the Catholic Church." His parents "made it;" "got theirs the hard way through diligence, night school, and many years of playing the game and waiting for their turn." In school, Tom and his peers, being third generation "contented [themselves] with meeting minimum expectations and reserved [their] learning power for those projects which most stimulated [their] minds."[17] Were it not for his middle-class background, Tom asserts, he may have ended as a dropout. Tom's work is his doctoral dissertation, conducted through "participatory research."[18] He focusses on two private, non-profit liberating education institutions working at the grassroots in the city of Chicago. His premise, the issue which motivates his study, is a conclusion:

> Most attempts to develop liberatory education in the United States have failed.

Tom's research is an attempt to uncover the reasons for this "failure," using a research methodology that will not violate the integrity of what liberating education is. Tom wants to take a first step towards the formulation of a theory of liberating education within the United States.

I see Ira as more attuned to the reality which Latinos confronted in the United States, and Tom as having a negativistic—if not pessimistic—stand. Ira talks as an individual practitioner who critically reflects upon his role in a given system. Tom, in spite of all his efforts at dialogue and participation, is an "outsider" (he has not practiced liberating education with undereducated working class adults on a long-range basis). Ira invested years in the practice about which he writes. Tom invested 14 months in the participatory research process, and is (or was) a member of the Board of Directors at one of the institutions he studied. I disagree strongly with Tom's contention on "failure" as an absolute result: failure as compared to what within the United States? Ira's experience was the defeat of the Open Admissions program on behalf of which he struggled. Yet, this is not perceived as "failure." His is more a feeling that being defeated in a battle does not mean the end of the war, and that defeat itself is a learning experience. He writes, Ira says,[19]

> As a means to resist the erasure of memory and as one means to prevent the forces which ended Open Admissions from ending our appreciation of an episode in social reconstruction.

For Ira, critical teaching is still possible. It may be visible or low profile, according to the space allowed by the powers that be, but it "helps lay a base for transcendent change, which will have to be fought for and won in multiple social arenas."[20]

My problem with Tom's view is his orientation towards institutions as aggregates of their parts, and his drawing of conclusions on that basis.

At some point, Tom seems to realize this when he states:[21]

> One unresolved contradiction emerged from the research process. While learners contributed much to the study, they were understandably less interested in the generation of theory than the staff and administrators for whom theoretical assumptions were highly significant. As a result the theoretical portions of this study were filtered through an increasingly conceptually oriented group of educators... this group functions as a vanguard —an élite within a program committed to egalitarian structures.

My experience with liberating education programs has taught me that an institution in itself cannot be liberating: people can be. And within any institution there are all sorts of people, points of view, practices, stated and unstated ontological and epistemological beliefs. I guess I have learned to trust more what people do than what they say they are. Particularly in liberating education, I have seen so many actions in contradiction with verbal expressions about those same actions, that I am cautious as to the validity of generalizations based upon what people say. Further, I know how resistant are program people to "outsiders" and Tom is still, no matter how empathetic, a university-based person conducting research with (or about) grassroots liberating education programs that, to begin with, he has declared a failure.

Both Ira Shor and Tom Heaney believe that obstacles to the development of critical consciousness are far more formidable in the United States than in the Third World. Ira sees the United States as subtly "imposing an anti-critical mass culture which is the first and largest learning problem of the general population." In his view, the United States opposses mass intellectualism and has created a mass denial of reason "achieved through a network of cultural instruments for thought control."[22] Some would say that the statement could apply to any country. I would agree. But it is the subtle, hardly noticeable, way in which it is done in the United States what constitutes the problem. Is not the United States, after all, the "land of freedom and democracy," where if you work hard you can make it, and where there is equal opportunity for all?

Ira distributes the obstacles to critical thought in the United States among several categories. Let us briefly go over them.[23]

- The vocational culture — Ira describes this as a machinification of character, which narrows the concept of human development to the meaning of "trained hands." This increases human's low self esteem and divides the workforce (mental/manual) relegating some (I would say most) to the bottom strata by means of bureaucratic testing in school and work-classification on the work site. It is a culture which socializes workers against intellectual life, against feeling and against autonomy.

- False consciousness — This is an irrationalizing force which conditions people to police themselves through their internalization of the ideas preached by the ruling elite (such as sexism, racism, and the worship of the rich and powerful). The deepest dimensions of false consciousness are four, as identified by Ira.

    1. Reification — This is a static and contained way of thinking which narrowly experiences life in stationary pieces. It originates in the isolated fragment of labor each person performs on the job. The end result is that "the system" is perceived in an "aura of mysterious invulnerability," in front of which humans feel overwhelmed. The elusiveness of social control gets people confused as to the meaning of freedom, and about the means to be free and whole. The people become too fragmented to organize for popular liberation, and develop ways "to beat the system" for survival, which, deep-down, only is a means to outsmart capitalism by playing within the very rules of the business world. Reification prevents humans from seeing systematic wholes.

    2. Pre-scientific thinking — This mode of thinking is a retreat from comprehending cause and effect in reality by accepting mystical causations, which are unverifiable, to explain reality. An example is to attribute everything "wrong" to the "flawed, rotten human nature;" or the belief in "lady luck;" and, as a last example, "brand-name consumerist loyalty" which avoids a critical examination of the quality of one consumer item as compared with the item to which one is "loyal." This dimension of false consciousness discourages a search for rational explanations of authentic problems.

3. Acceleration — Described by Ira as "going nowhere fast" this consists of the speeding up of the population's mental processes beyond a pace which is suitable for critical analysis; a conditioning of the mind to operate at a perceptual speed which repels the time needed for careful scrutiny. It is mostly inflicted by the electronic mass media but also by sloganizing and elements in the routine life itself: the commuting traffic, the fast-food industry, elevators, escalators, revolving doors, motorized toothbrushes and a myriad of consumer items to make things go fast.

   Acceleration promotes a "hysterical saturation of the senses" and an addiction to high levels of surface stimulations. This causes minds to be uncomfortable with the necessarily slow pace of critical thought and dialogue, which represents "a jarring change in perceptual speeds and intellectual demands."

4. Mystification — In case all of the above fail, the system still has this back-up. It consists of false answers to social questions; answers constantly predicated as "truths." Some examples provided by Ira:

   - America needs nuclear power to free us from the greedy Arab oil countries.
   - Women belong in the kitchen (for Latinos, in the house).
   - Blacks use welfare to buy Cadillacs.
   - The grass is always greener...
   - If you are so smart, why ain't you rich?
   - Words like nigger, spic, mick, kike, wop, cunt, dyke, which are condensed linguistic expressions for whole mystical fields of belief which alienate oppressed groups from each other.

   Other instances of mystification are the well-known blaming the victim attitudes and, interestingly enough, the sports culture which "massifies people away from class consciousness" by making all classes "united" in the defense of this particular "team."

- The third category of obstacles to critical thought in the United States is the non-practice of democracy.

> In a land where bureaucracy and hierarchy reign and in which state and corporations have an imposing and dehumanizing presence in our daily lives, patriotic clichés notwithstanding, "people pay a price for talking back to parents, bosses, teachers, supervisors, cops, judges, landlords, credit managers and bureaucrats." The population virtually exerts no power over elected officers. The lack of practice in democratic participation retards the development of organizational skills which are needed to sustain political resistance. We learn the need to be quiet, instead, in the presence of authorities.
>
> The last category mentioned by Ira is "the demands of private life." On top of all of the above, each of us has many different roles to play, and responsibilities assigned to each role, within and outside our families. The generation gap does not help. Neither does the need to earn a living, often to commute, to do housework, etc.

Who has the time and mental disposition for dialogue and critical reflection in the manner of the ruling class in American society (either that of the "old" or the emerging "new class")?[24] After a detailed examination of all of the above circumstances, Ira Shor goes ahead to describe what he did with his students to fight against it all, and to promote critical thinking, both in himself and his learners.

As stated, Tom Heaney focusses on private institutions working at the grassroots—quite a different environment—although the learners in Tom's work were not very different from the ones Ira interacted with (except, perhaps, for recent immigrants). Reading Tom is another must, for different reasons. Tom focusses on the problems of liberating education institutions that work within the system and the limits they must confront. Ira, after all, is granted by the system the authority to be the master of his classroom. Liberating education institutions are not the owners of their lives, mainly because financially they depend upon "the system" for their survival. Also, because while the people who integrate them ("we") are as subject to the forces described by Ira as anyone else, there is a tendency not to be so conscious of the fact: we are (or work) within a liberating institution, moved by this and that ideal, and except for our funding, we believe ourselves to be "away from it all," as islands in the middle of nowhere.

Tom's findings are resonant to the experience of Latinos, but only partly so. I would say that they are most useful to that which in the theory should not exist, but does: the élite of administrators and "old timers" within hierarchical systems of liberating education. These are the ones trapped into all kinds of conflicts. As stated by Tom:[25]

> These liberatory programs have two levels of existence...they are academic institutions with the same managerial and maintenance needs of any other institution [and] they are the embodiment of a liberating education movement (...) Conflict is inevitable, and the conflict is personally centered on those persons who are charged with the direction and administration of liberatory education within a traditional educational context. The experiences either exhausts the energies of these leaders of grinds them into pieces, caught as they are between the demands of two contradictory purposes.

It is these people, whom Tom also called an élite vanguard, who can most benefit from Tom's work. Because, purposefully or not, I believe, it is for them that Tom writes.

Let us have a look at what Tom found as a result of his research. Regarding the characteristics, values and commonalities in the projects he studied, Tom finds that:[26]

- The basis of power is found in collective, rather than individual action.
- Collaborative modes are emphasized over competitive modes of organization.
- An active role is assumed in relation to the production of culture and consumerism is rejected as both an insult and source of impoverishment.
- Conflict is preferred to compromise, and alienation is lived-out instead of being disguised as self-destructive behavior.

- Liberating educators are first doers of their words, and then talkers, valuing action over discussion and relating discussion to their need for reflection on what they have already begun to do.

- Sectarianism is avoided by submitting all action to critical reflection, through the development of consciousness and through consensual governance.

The values that seem to be present in these projects, says Tom, oppose those believed to be inherent to non-liberating education. The contrasting values are:

Liberating Educators	Non-Liberating Educators
1. Collective learning	Individualized instruction
2. Culture-making	Culture-consuming
3. Creative alienation	Adaptation and compromise
4. Direct action	Conceptualization
5. Critical consciousness	Acquiescence

Finally, the roles that are (or should be) desired in liberating education programs are also in contradiction with those of "the system:" the students are "learners who teach." The teachers are "teachers who learn." Administrators are "persons who listen in collegiality." And the members of a Board of Directors are "persons who share power."

These, again, I only consider "shoulds," ideal stands or goals to be reached by an élite of liberating educators. Perhaps too ideal, given the conditions under which we work. Tom's conclusions, which I will reproduce below, stem from the standards against which liberating education programs are compared. The conclusions are:

- There is a fundamental contradiction between liberating and traditional education programs. Incongruities are acceptable [to the system] until praxis so transforms learners that they can no longer maintain an uncritical stance in relation to the sponsoring system. The academic élite will take an increasingly critical view of liberating education. Empowerment will be effectively blocked by economic sanctions imposed by the institutional sponsor. THE LONG-TERM COST OF SURVIVAL IN THE SYSTEM MIGHT BE THAT LIBERATING EDUCATION CEASES TO BE LIBERATING. WHICH IS NOT SURVIVAL.

- The programs which most easily survive are the ones that are not qualitatively different from, just better than, traditional adult education programs. Survivors do the same things that all other programs do, only they do it more effectively.

- This form of success [effectiveness] brings incentives and encouragement by the traditional system, to improve effectiveness even more. The pressure for growth [the numbers game] is imposed when funds are contingent upon such growth.

- Growth becomes the basis of economic security and acceptability to the sponsoring system. (For example, increased enrollments.)

- BUT THERE ARE LIMITS TO GROWTH: Those beyond which mutuality and participation levels cease to be workable.

- The pressure for growth has been one common way in which large systems coopt liberating education programs, and neutralize their power to engage in collective, transforming action.

- Liberating education programs more clearly perceive the oppression which they oppose than the freedom to which they aspire. THEY ARE A VISION BEING FORMED.

- When failure occurs in liberating education, it too often is not because the program has been "done in" by the educational establishment– though this might well be true– but at a deeper level because the program has greatly exaggerated the importance of education in the process of liberation and social change. Education causes neither to occur in the absence of political goals and means.

- The conflict between traditional and liberating education has, in fact, been used to disguise and ignore the inherent weakness of many liberating programs.

I would agree with several of Tom's conclusions, and strongly disagree with others. Latino institutions for liberating education were created to be and to operate as educational institutions even if "different." No one can deny this. Many realize that "education alone" will not do the trick of social transformation and that education is political.

But none of us has thought that education will bring "revolution," or structural change.

What Tom believes to be the "inherent weakness" of many liberating programs is that these are not tied to wider and broader movements of social transformation. This is true, if we look at them from outside, from "the mainstream." Many programs are, for the most part, isolated, utopic endeavors especially among Latinos who are not yet organized politically in any meaningful way. Yet, there are reasons beyond this fact. Where are the "broader movements for social and political transformation" in the United States within which Latinos can be integrated? Those directed and integrated by the progressive Anglos? Racism and distrust are prevalent and neither white nor Latino liberating educators are immune to these realities. Let me offer two personal anecdotes to illustrate the point.

Upon my arrival to the state of Virginia, I reached out to groups of organized women in the state to find out what they were doing and if there was a way in which I could pitch in. During a telephone conversation, this is more or less, what I heard:

> Oh, an ethnic! Great. We've never had an ethnic in our group!

As a Puerto Rican born and raised in the Island, I have never seen myself as "an ethnic." I felt not only offended, but angry at the so-called progressive, liberated white women of Virginia and did not even consider joining them again. Politically incorrect? Perhaps. But human. Each of us has to choose where to invest the amount of time that we can squeeze out of our personal and work lives. I did not consider this a worthy investment of my time.

The second anecdote was as recent as 1983, when I participated in an invitational conference of progressive adult educators. There was one Black and I was the only U.S.-based Latina among the invitees. I raised the issue both verbally and, later on, in writing. All hell broke loose.

Later, I was informed by a friend that the "ruling" group had conducted a "trial in absence." The verdict? I had not followed the rules of the game. (What game? Which rules? No one had informed me there were any! But even if they had informed me, I would have refused to accept "hidden agendas" within a group of people who are supposed to be progressive working for the empowerment and liberation of the oppressed.)

White progressives in all sorts of U.S. movements for broader social transformation are always discussing "the lack of minority representation" in their meetings as a serious "problem." The Black participant had stated very strongly at the same conference that no one in his (Black) community would waste time in participating in a meeting such as the one we were in. A White from the northeast expressed his disgust at proceedings that he also considered a waste of time, and that in his view offered nothing of value, no new learning that he could take back to share with the community he represented, and that would justify the expenses made to cover the costs of the conference. They had other, more immediate, problems to deal with.[27] As far as I know, no one wrote about it. I did and was penalized in such a subtle way that— except for identifying my source, which I refuse to do— I cannot offer any evidence.

It is sad, it may be divisive in terms of political strategies for structural change; it may be what you want: but many Latinos and other minority members in progressive and not so progressive circles alike do feel treated as if they were laboratory specimens to be studied. As a result, we create our own institutions for our people. We provide perhaps "the same" things but, as Tom admits, in a better, more efficient way. And that may very well be the limits of what Latinos and other politically unorganized minorities can do at this time, given the economic and social situation of our communities, and the isolation of our élites within other progressive élites in the United States.[28]

I suggest that no program created in the system by Whites, Latinos or whoever, can be qualitatively different from any other program out there, if by qualitatively we imply something like "essentially" or "inherently" better. *If we are in, that is exactly where we are*. If the country in which we are is plagued by all kinds of illnesses, none of us is immune.

We can try to be different, we can try to create better ways, even to live differently. And many are, indeed, trying. All, however, are tempted by material incentives, and subject to cooptation by the system, not to mention the harassment that may come from very different directions, no matter how subtle. The system can get at any of us in many different ways.

We all need a salary or a means to obtain income. There are those who cannot afford the luxury of "risking it," and still try to do what they can. Others can more easily risk open defiance (e.g., tenured professors, single persons without a family to support and protect, persons that can always fall back upon the income of their parents to survive if left unemployed, etc.). Facing this subject, Tom says:[29]

> Those engaged in a liberatory praxis must also eat and pay rent, so *employment is not an unworthy goal for revolutionaries. It is frequently only when we possess degrees and credentials that we have the luxury to minimize their importance*. (My emphasis.)

We might ask, as we did with Freire, about the type of "revolutionaries" of which Tom is talking and about which type of "revolution." I also ask: has Tom considered the type, amount and quality of credentials of the staff members in the programs he studied, to examine the extent to which these are sufficient to afford them "the luxury to minimize the importance of degrees and credentials"? To what extent the perceived "failure" to be "liberating" in the institutions created by Latinos for Latino learners is due to the fact that only a few can afford the luxury of being liberating as defined by all utopic "shoulds"?

The examples mentioned by Tom as successful programs (success meaning programs that have not made a compromise with the system)[30] are those which were conducted by Saul Alinsky and Myles Horton. These persons, says Tom:[31]

> Might not be regarded as "educators" in the traditional usage of that term but have probably contributed far more to the liberatory education of poor and working class communities that the providers of programs more explicitly identified as educational.

I have already mentioned Alinsky's rules for radicals as compared with Freire's. Tom considers Alinsky's practice "reminiscent of the process described by Paulo Freire." I disagree, for the reasons stated in Section 2.

It would take a study of both Alinsky and Myles' classs positions; their educational credentials; the conditions and composition of the communities with which they worked; and a comparison with the situation of Latinos in the United States over the seventies, to determine if Tom is comparing apples and oranges. That is out of the range of this document, but the issue stands for further exploration.

Notes to Section 5: Working in the System

1. The term "revolution" here means armed struggle.
2. Herbert Marcuse, El Hombre Unidimensional (Mexico: Joaquín Mortiz, 1968). Published in English by Beacon Press, Boston, 1964.
3. Dominicé and Darcy, IDAC Document #5, p. 28. See note 49 in Section 1.
4. Illich, History of Needs, pp. 10-13.
5. This was the origin of Project D.A.R.E. See note 13 in Section 4.
6. David Reed, Education for Building a People's Movement (Boston: South End Press, 1981), p. 13.
7. Letter from David Reed, dated August 3, 1983.
8. Alvin Gouldner in The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class, mentions that the cultural new class includes an "academic proletariat." I wonder if the gap I describe between the grassroots people and the academicians reflects this situation. Even though working at the grassroots, most project directors in IRCEL were college-educated people.
9. This was, in my opinion, another manifestation of the non-directive approach we sought.
10. The second—and last—was the IRCEL Conference described in the notes of the previous section.
11. There was no dialogue, but question and answer sessions. The program did not provide participants with time to discuss what they were doing. Proceedings seemed too "theoretical," demanding from Freire answers to problems specific to the United States context. The group was too large for a participatory approach.
12. A summary of what transpired in Vermont was provided in Educación Liberadora, April-May, 1981.
13. Ira Shor, Critical Teaching and Everyday Life (Boston: South End Press, 1980).
14. Thomas W. Heaney, "Adult Learning and Empowerment: Toward a Theory of Liberating Education" (Chicago, 1980).
15. The idea of a class suicide applies to more than one situation, as Ira helps us see.

16. Shor, *Critical Teaching*, p. xiv.

17. Heaney, *Adult Learning*, p. 2.

18. There is a considerable amount of literature on participatory research. For a good introduction to the subject, see Folke Dubell, ed., *Research for the People. Research by the People. Selected Papers from the International Forum on Participatory Research in Ljubljana, Yugoslavia, 1980* (Sweden: LinKöping University Department of Education, 1981).

19. Shor, *Critical Teaching*, p. 269.

20. *Ibid*.

21. Heaney, *Adult Learning*, p. 12.

22. Shor, *Critical Teaching*, p. 47.

23. *Ibid*., pp. 47-87.

24. Thinking-for-survival may not be "revolutionary," but it is certainly critical. It is a different manner from that of the "haves" or the "have some-want mores" in Alinsky's terms. We must be careful with our elitist view of "critical thinking" as a synonym for "the manner in which *we* think (or would like to think)."

25. Heaney, *Adult Learning*, p. 53.

26. The summary to be presented in the next pages was excerpted for the 1981 IRCEL Conference, and distributed as a hand-out, with Tom Heaney's consent.

27. The value of the immediate problems and concerns of the learners we work with is perhaps the most ignored issue in our theory and practice.

28. Coupled with our lack of serious reflection on the issues I am raising in this essay.

29. Heaney, *Adult Learning*, p. 136. The very fact that the statements I have emphasized must be stated, points at the elitist nature of our endeavor.

30. Heaney, *Adult Learning*, p. 23.

31. *Ibid*., p. 32.

Section 6

EVALUATION AND TRANSFORMATION

The word "evaluation" should entail no mystery. In its etimological origins, it had to do with values, through which humans determined the worthiness of whatever; something we do all the time throughout our lives. But there is no word that academia and/or the government cannot turn into a mysterious and complex "concept" that only duly certified professionals can or should handle. Thus, the word evaluation was (multiple choice): (a) re-defined, (b) confused, (c) revised, (d) prostituted, (e) all previous choices, (f) none of the previous choices, (g) who cares?

Our world is flooded with "surnamed" evaluations: process and product; formative and summative; quantitative and qualitative; goal-free; action-oriented; and so on.[1] External funding sources upon which, as stated, most of us came to depend, required an evaluation plan prior to considering us for funding. Further, evaluation plans had to be of such nature as to give a reasonable guarantee that they would produce an "objective" evaluation.

According to Sjoberg,[2] the meaning of evaluation was restricted during the sixties. The war-on-poverty programs created by the federal government and its cadre of profitably employed social scientists considered "evaluation" as a synonym for "determining the negative or positive impact of planned social intervention." Yes, we had to make an estimate in all proposals of "expected impact" and/or "intended outcomes," and to say how we were going to find out if, in fact, what we expected was attained. We had to be "accountable," to have well-defined goals and/or "measurable" objectives expressed in "operational" (i.e., measurable) terms. Remember: we did not have a clear idea of to where we wanted to go, much less what to expect inventing our way through the implementation of a Third World pedagogy and philosophy of education in the United States.

We intended to work with a population which the United States establishment considers at best "difficult" if not impossible, hopeless or unreachable. The liberals of the system had nothing to lose and much to gain if we could reach these difficult populations with programs that, due to the grassroots nature of our operations and the scarce funds granted—not to mention the naiveté of those of us who wanted to try—would not prepare learners for admission to Harvard. At the most, we could get adult learners into community colleges and that is what community colleges were there for, anyway. In the meantime, both the government and private philantropy could get a lot of mileage showing how hard they were trying to expand "equality of educational opportunities for all."

We learned to write evaluation plans, copied the least restrictive surnamed models available (mostly qualitative, prpcess and/or action-oriented evaluations)[3] and again worded carefully what we wrote. However, we were trapped into the use of evaluation designs created by the very system in and against which we were working. We had to do what Sjoberg calls "determining the negative or positive impact of planned social intervention," according to what the funding sources determined to be positive or negative. I have already explained how, at least at the level of the shoulds, what we wanted was different from what most funding sources in the system wanted. Our definitions of positive or negative were different. But there are other roots for the discrepancy that I have not touched yet. "We" did not have the time to explore more issues and most did not feel the need to do it. I refer to issues of ontology and epistemology.

Different views on what is positive or negative stem from different ontological and epistemological assumptions, often unstated and based upon vested interests, assumptions that are considered as the truth and are seldom questioned. Let us briefly review the meaning of ontology and epistemology as relevant to our work and the evaluations we were expected to perform.

The word ontology denotes a philosophical quest, closely linked to metaphysics, which aims at discovering the essence of being and/or things. In our particular field of interest, ontology would lead us to ask questions such as: What is a human being? What is the nature (or essence) of reality? Are human beings inherently good, bad, or neither? Are we what we are due to simple biology (genetics, heredity, chemicals in our bodies?). Due to the influence of our social/ecological environment? Both? Neither? Is there such a thing as a "born criminal"? Are Blacks, Latinos, Indians, genetically inferior in intelligence? Are the poor poor because they are dumb and lazy? Have things "always been this way" and thus, not amenable to change? Or is reality something we make and thus can change? These and other questions, and our personal answers will give us a glimpse of our ontological views. Other questions, not so frequent, regarding ontology: is reality really out there? Or is it "inside our minds"? Would there be a tree if there were no one to name it, to identify it as a "tree"? In other words, would there be a reality if there were no humans to see, perceive, describe it? Is reality perhaps both "out-there" and "inside-us," the out interacting with the in by means of our nervous system? And so on. The questions are really endless.

Epistemology is closely related to ontology. The former deals exclusively with knowledge: the origin, nature, methods and limits of human knowledge, hopefully coherently integrated into a theory. The relation with ontology, it seems to me, is based on the fact that our views on the "essence" of human beings and of reality will be necessarily related to our views on whether, why and how, humans acquire or develop knowledge. If we believe in "born criminals" the amount and kind of knowledge that we will grant to that particular human being will be the one that leads her or him into what s/he was born for. But epistemology gets more complicated, in that it seeks to encompass the standards or criteria by which we can reliably judge the truth or falsity of our knowledge (how can we know if what we believe to be true is, in fact, true?). Questions to explore our personal epistemological stand would be similar to the following: Can humans learn? If so, how and how can we check on the truth of this knowledge, if in any possible way? Are there limits to what we can know?

Granted, most people, especially those engaged in a struggle to survive, are not constantly exploring any of the ontological and epistemological questions I have offered as examples. We tend to be content with what we think is real, or true, and seldom examine the origin of the stands we take, whatever they are. But there is no question that we all act based upon some kind of ontology and some kind of epistemology, even if we call it "common sense."

Paulo Freire expresses himself on these matters in his writings and dialogues. In fact, he denounces traditional or oppressive educational systems among other reasons because, although educational systems are based upon an ontology and an epistemology, these are not stated as such. Instead, says Freire, oppressors propagate ideas (Freire calls them "myths") as "truth" and this is done through a variety of manipulative techniques which are an obstacle to the development of critical thought. Examples of what Freire calls myths are statements made by the oppressive system explicitly or implicitly, such as:[4]

- the oppressive order (or system) is an order of freedom
- we are all free to work where we want; if you don't like your job, you are free to quit and seek another
- the oppressive order respects human rights
- if you are not lazy, you can "make it" within the system
- everyone has the right to an education
- we are all equal and equally treated
- the élite is a heroic class who guards the occidental, Christian civilization from the attacks of the materialist barbarians
- the people should be grateful to the élite, accept its mandates and be content
- a rebellion against the élite is a sin against God
- the élite is dynamic; the oppressed are lazy and dishonest. The former are "ontologically" superior to the latter.

It should be evident to the reader that Freire, just by calling all the above "myths" strongly disagrees with every one of them. But, alas, Freire is not very clear either in his alternative ontological and epistemological formulations.

Freire's ontology sees human beings as essentially historical beings (as opposed to "biological") that are unfinished entities and thus have a vocation to be more, to be free. Different from animals, humans inherit a historical and cultural world that is made by humans and which they are able to transform by acting upon it. Animals are programmed to adjust to their environment and cannot have a sense of history, much less "make" culture. Humans are special beings. Although conditioned by their environment they are not determined by it: they can act and transform reality. Reality, which is historical and cultural, not only biological, is both "out-there" (it exists) and "inside us" (what we make of it, the way we grasp it in our minds, how we see it and interpret it). Humans are beings capable of "taking distance" from their conditions, their reality; to submit these to critical thought; and to decide on appropriate courses of action to transform that reality. The part of reality that is "inside us" is the consciousness we develop about the nature of the out-there reality. Early in his work, Freire distinguished between qualitatively different types of consciousness, ranging from magic to critical. This he has not frequently mentioned over the past three years, so I will not discuss it.

Reality, for Freire, is historical and thus dynamic (as opposed to static). The human world and mind are in a never-ending process of becoming. If this is the case, how do humans learn or acquire knowledge? Freire's epistemology is not free of contradictions. He holds the human mind to be both active and social; and states that we learn through a process of abstraction: abstracting information from the out-there reality and reflecting upon it through the use of critical thought. But "true" knowledge only emerges when critical reflection is combined with transforming action and further critical reflection, in a never-ending process of these beings whose ontological vocation is to be more.[5] Knowledge is not a static given, but a constructed becoming. Freire rejects that knowledge can be "poured into" the mind as if the mind were only a passive receptacle and as if knowledge were a static, finished thing.

It seems that group learning is more "true" than individual learning in Freire's thought. Freire does not account for the "true" learning of revolutionary leaders and/or those individuals in the upper social stratas that commit "class suicide," *prior* to their suicide, but I would like to raise the issue for the reader to reflect upon.

Freire admits that the social world into which humans are born does condition humans, but in this conditioning he sees the epistemological roots of human freedom:[6]

> We are conditioned. How do I know it? Because I was able to go beyond the limits of condition. If I cannot see the conditions, I cannot say I am a conditioned being. What are the limits of this room? The walls. How do I know? Because I can't walk through them. Then I know. But if I say I am a conditioned being, this is also why I can go beyond. Secondly, it is this being conditioned that makes me free. I recognize it and I have to transform it, not just describe it. The way to change is historical. The process of knowing my own limits comes together with change. I cannot accept that we are beings of adaptation because we are historical beings. History is not just the past. It is also what is happening.
>
> My becoming, I am; but if I just am, I am not.

If there is only one correct way of understanding reality (*the correct way*, Freire repeatedly writes and says), and that is the reflecting-acting-reflecting process, which leads to "true" learning, can we say that those who do *not* use that particular way *do learn*? I guess Freire would respond with a "Yes, but..." (they learn myths, or they learn how to be oppressors, or they learn the *wrong* kind of things, a knowledge that is not liberating but oppressive).

What Freire poses it, ultimately, that everyone who does not think in the "correct" way is in serious ontological and epistemological trouble:

he or she is not aware of the human ontological vocation to be more, of the human essence, and may therefore be engaged in a process of dehumanization. Pretty abstract, granted. But that is what Freire implies on the subject.

In his earlier writings, Freire depicted the oppressed as "dual, inauthentic beings, who harbored the oppressor within their selves, and who are escaping from freedom." For Freire this was a bleak, but not hopeless situation. The pedagogy specifically developed for (although Freire says "with") the oppressed was deemed to be a first step along the way towards humanization. Once the oppressed learn that things can be changed they enter the right, human, world.

As in other aspects of Freire's thought, his epistemology and ontology are somewhat tainted or obscured through the use of adjectives such as "true," "correct" and "authentic." This may or may not suggest an extremely directive style (if not dogmatism) that readers can interpret as they wish within a broad spectrum of political options. Freire has not specified precisely where he intends his ontology and epistemology to guide the struggle for liberation, nor what liberation means, concretely, within a given economic and political system.

Freire's ideas have been assumed to be consonant with the rallying cries for "transformation" which emerged in the United States over the seventies, denouncing many of the things Freire denounces in his writings. Practitioners of Freire's ideas moved in an environment of what in the United States is deemed "progressive" sectors. It is important to examine —even if briefly— the phenomenon of the transformation movement,[7] in which liberating educators participated, even if only through association with transformationalists.

The "new" physics, available through the paperback books trade have created havoc with all previous "Western" ontologies and epistemologies. The nature (or essence) of reality seems more and more elusive, closely resembling what the West has pejoratively considered "Eastern mysticism." This information, coming from what have traditionally been considered "hard" or "exact" sciences, has created among intellectuals a crisis pregnant with doubts: perhaps what we have considered "true" is just an illusion, a result of an arrogance grounded in ignorance; perhaps it is time for us to reflect critically (terms very much used by Freire) upon everything we have thus far accepted as "given," including Freire's relevance to our work.

No statistics are available as to how many United States citizens have joined networks which accept ideas such as the following, popularized by many new paperbacks:

- We are all inhabitants of a planet (Spaceship Earth) with limited resources.
- Unlimited growth is but a dream.
- The environment (Mother Earth) must be protected from the ravages, wastage and excesses of industrial growth, planned obsolescense and consumerism.
- Small _is_ beautiful.
- Soft, environmentally sensitive technology is preferable to hard, environmentally destructive technologies.
- Non-violent forms of citizens' resistance is the means to avoid nuclear warfare. All struggle unfolds within a broader framework of interdependence.
- Decentralization and human-scale organizations are an alternative to impersonal bureaucracies, citizen's apathy and alienation.
- Self-help is preferable to "professional" help.
- The mind-body dualism must be abandoned: Illness is not something "out there" that we "catch" but something that happens to us when the "in-here" is out of balance.

These are just a few of the many ideas which are emerging and being lived at the United States grassroots, even if under the leadership of members of a progressive, mostly white, élite.

A search seems to be under way for new, "post" ideas: alternatives to liberalism, capitalism, socialism and communism are being sought, based upon the belief that none of these have been able to solve the major problems humanity confronts today. All of this occurs in a fluid, not formally organized movement, mostly through networking,[8] word-of-mouth and local initiatives, and heavily influenced by a mass paperbook trade that brings out so many books on the subject each year that it is difficult to keep track of them. I deem it important to examine the political theory of this movement.

Drawing from the information and knowledge obtained through the new physics, a new program for the political transformation of the United States society is being informally and not very overtly crafted by what Gouldner calls the cultural New Class. It has been adopted by prominent leaders of the "radical" sixties.[9] Its bottom line is the belief that "personal revolutions can change institutions."[10] Activists must first work at transforming themselves. Once this is accomplished, "enemies disappear" because we become more tolerant of other's ideas, and because by transforming our consciousness we learn to channel our energies [power is energy] in a more constructive manner. A "revolution" is then under way.

It is part of this movement's political stand that the source of social conflicts is the inner human. Transformed humans will "coalesce into self-organizing groups" and will devise "ways to govern themselves without determining a boss or establishing a clear agenda."[11] Transformed humans, "knowing that changes of heart and not rational argument alone sway people, must find ways of relating to others at the most human and immediate level." This, for Ferguson, means that these people should live by their principles, revive and revise the ethic of means and ends by considering that "means must be as honorable as ends," and going into political battle "stripped of conventional political weapons."[12] This because democracy "is not a political state but a spiritual condition."[13] As for "revolution:"[14]

> A revolution means that power changes hands, of course, but it does not necessarily mean open struggle, a coup, victor and vanquished. Power can be dispersed through the social fabric.

The idea is to find a refuge for the person, which is deemed as inexistent in capitalist societies or in "the old revolutionary mass movements."[15] The call is for total decentralization, based on the idea that "power in the brain is decentralized."[16] Thus, self-help networks, considered to be "non-ideological" are seen as key to social transformation.[17]

Whenever I find these ideas in the United States, I cannot help but think that they are just one more luxury afforded to the well-to-do U.S. citizens by the international expansion of U.S. capitalism, at the expense of the economy and social well-being of the Third World. Marilyn Ferguson's statement that[18]

> until technology freed us from the struggle to survive few had the time or opportunity to look within to explore the psyche (my emphasis),

makes me ask: about who is Ferguson talking? What percentage of the entire population of the Earth has been "freed from the struggle to survive?"

The whole rationale is based upon the power of knowledgeable individuals to transform themselves and, thus, to transform "culture." Very close to Paulo Freire's first theoretical formulation, class suicide and all. Yet, in the United States it is not a matter of joining the lot of the oppressed: it is a matter of increased personal (individual) growth and cultural capital coupled with a "vocation:"[19]

> A kind of collective sense of destiny—not a mapped-out myth but a search for meaning, a tacit understanding that people and learners believe in something beyond material success, beyond nationalism, beyond quick gratification.

Freire's class suicide is individual. The U.S. transformation movement believes itself to be integrated by individuals acting out of a "collective sense of destiny," whereby humans can transcend material concerns. I cannot help but ask if transformationalists expect hungry humans to transcend hunger.

The U.S. transformation movement, different from Freire, rejects sharp dichotomies, at least overtly:[20]

> We are so indoctrinated by our right/wrong, win/lose, all/nothing habits that we keep putting all our half-truths into two piles: truth versus lies, Marxism versus capitalism, science versus religion, romance versus realism... Partial viewpoints force us into artificial choices.

For a hungry person, I would remind "transformationalists," the question "to eat or not to eat" is far from being an artificial choice. I see no provisions in the transformation movement for what Kolakowski called elementary situations, in which choices are not only crystal-clear, but also very pertinent and urgent. Ultimately, the U.S. transformation movement may have been financed by the dispossessed of the Third World. The élites at many Third World countries have allowed or sought the penetration of U.S. capital, perhaps wanting to have a chance at the very same "exploration of their inner psyches" that is so much taken for granted in the United States.

The movement does "heal" the cultural new class in the United States from the pain, frustration and alienation caused by its struggle against the old class. I have experienced the glowing feelings of sharing, well-being, warmth and affection that are transmitted among transformationalists. Yet, perhaps because I was born and raised in a colony, and because my cultural capital, acquired in adulthood, is coupled with many childhood reminiscences of unbelievably cruel stories of poverty and exploitation, I cannot help myself from thinking that all those nice feelings are only one more privilege afforded by my class position, and that the whole transformational thing may very well be very selfish, self-centered and a sort of anesthesia not only against the confusion produced by U.S. society, but also against the much more cruel conditions in which most humans live in the world. If we "crossed the bridge" towards inner growth, who paid the bill? Will those who have not had the luxury of being freed from the struggle for survival want to cross the same bridge? Who is going to pay their bill?

What if, what we are really talking about is the existence of two nations, two cultures, two different world views: that of the élite, within which a civil "war" is being waged; and that of "the people," everywhere? Whose culture are we talking about? What about the culture of those who are still, because they have no other choice, struggling to survive? Are we saying that "ours" is better?

Let us review what Fritoj Capra has to say on the subject:[21]

> The social movements of the 1960's and 1970's represent the rising culture, which is now ready for the passage to the solar age. While the transformation is taking place, the declining culture refuses to change, clinging ever more rigidly to its outdated ideas. Nor will the dominant social institutions hand over their leading roles to the new cultural forces. But they will inevitably go on to decline and disintegrate while the rising culture will continue to rise, and eventually will assume its leading role. As the turning point approaches, the realization that evolutionary changes of this magnitude cannot be prevented by short-term political activities provides our strongest hope for the future. (My emphasis.)

Again, let us ask, the rising culture of whom? The declining culture of whom? "Inevitable" decline? Sounds as deterministic as Marx's "inevitable" defeat of capitalism and the withering way of the state! Which representatives of the rising culture will assume "the leading role?" If the whole thing is inevitable, would not it be sufficient to sit down and just wait for it to happen? Is this some sort of political escapism (in Kolakowski's terms) or a political strategy of the new cultural class?

Capra envisions that the new forces will, at some point, "assert themselves decisively in the political arena," by coalescing into new political parties. These will include "environmentalists, consumer groups, feminists, ethnic minorities, and all those for whom the corporate economy is no longer working."[22] Note the similarity of the expected composition of the new parties and what Gouldner has called the strategies of the Cultural New Class.

As previously implied, we should consider that perhaps the transformation movement will not have resonance or will not make any sense for many Third World countries with which we are in solidarity. If, in fact, transformationalism is a leisure concern of a new class in a technologically and scientifically "overdeveloped" country, this will probably be the case, even among the élite of Third World countries.

Lacking any study to examine the issue, I will offer two anecdotes of situations I observed in Cuba, between our Cuban hosts and a group integrated by U.S. progressive citizens. The U.S. people were explaining the harmful effects of refined white sugar in the human body. The very same sugar upon which the Cuban economy depends. The U.S. visitors could hardly drink the syrupy black coffee that their Cuban hosts love and offered. They were torn between their beliefs on the harmful effects of sugar and their wish to be polite to the Cubans. The second anecdote refers to the inconvenience of our Cuban hosts, running around at the last minute to change their menus in order to accomodate these bunch of strange people who insisted on vegetarian diets—even if very politely—and refused to eat meat (an item highly valued in the Cuban diet). There were many such instances. Because I speak Spanish, I could overhear the comments of the Cuban people whenever there was a discrepancy between their expectations and what the visitors from abroad wanted or were interested in.

I would suggest that it would be the same with the "inner" Third World of the United States, with everyone who does not belong to the cultural new class, anywhere. Ivan Illich insists on reminding us that:[23]

> The rich and schooled and old of the world try to share their dubious blessings by foisting their pre-packaged solutions into the Third World.

I am persuaded that our immersion in the U.S. society did not allow us to examine the extent to which our practice in Freire-inspired programs was impacted by the transformation movement. It was assumed that Freire's ideas were consonant with transformationalist ideas and practices. But we were working with a "Third World" in the United States, and the possible dissonance between Freire's ideas and practices and those of the transformationalists was--to my knowledge--never explored. I have just touched the surface of both Freire and the transformationalists' political programs. The theme deserves further study and a great deal of discussion among practitioners of Freire's ideas in the United States, particularly when we are engaged in evaluating our practice. Let us turn briefly to what Freire recommends should be done in the area of evaluation.

Most of the statements on evaluation made by Paulo Freire, at least those available in the United States, range from 1968-69 (the Pedagogy of the Oppressed) to 1977-78 (Pedagogy in Process: Letters to Guinea-Bissau). Practical advice, interpreted as "how-to's" is not available in any of the sources. Freire's comments and suggestions would probably be unacceptable to most funding sources in the United States. Even if useful for conducting internal evaluations (within projects, not for public release), they are still not specific enough.

Evaluation is described by Freire as:[24]

> An action in which A & B evaluate together a practice that has taken place or which is taking place; based upon certain objectives above all political [my emphasis] which illuminate the practice that is being submitted to evaluation; with the purpose of attaining a greater effectiveness in the next practice.

In these evaluations, says Freire, "nothing should be hidden, neither accomplishments nor errors. The true error is to hide any error."

The phrase I emphasized in the above quote confronts us with the first problem in "officially" using Freire's ideas on evaluation within the United States context. While we accept Freire's contention that the objectives of any educational program are essentially political, the system and most of its sources of funding most certainly do not.[25] They are political, but also in power and they define reality as they please, calling it "the truth" and then teaching it in schools and through the mass media. We are not granted that luxury. We must be reformists helping the powers that be to sustain the "this is a wonderful country" slogan, by assisting those that the system has neglected.

Freire sees evaluation as a "formative effort" (in the United States, formation is understood as "training");[26] an effort that must be grounded into (or coupled with) "an investigation of new forms of action..." Evaluation is supposed to problematize the educational practice (to consider it a problem to be examined). The value of this activity is that those who engage in it have to stand before (and presumably outside of) their educational practice to confirm whether, in fact, they are doing what is best, or to agree upon areas in which their actions must be "rectified."[27]

Freire touches upon attitudes appropriate to an evaluation process. He believes that, in conducting an evaluation, there are two attitudes that should be excluded: (1) easy euphoria in the face of accomplishments, because euphoria leads to idealizations; and (2) negativism in the face of errors and mistakes, because this attitude invalidates experience by denying that we can learn to improve our practice by learning about our errors.[28]

I propose that in the United States "easy euphorias" tend to be the rule in the evaluations submitted by projects to funding agencies. Errors and problems are played down, lest funds are cut. Donors expect success (even when they say the contrary); an account of how the monies they granted enabled funded projects to accomplish such and such wonderful things, preferably stated in quantitative terms. It is wise to mention one or two "minor" problems, of course. But you better make sure that your reports confidently express that you have taken—or are in the process of taking—adequate measures to "solve" the identified problems. "Problem-_posing_" has no chance with U.S. funding sources unless accompanied by problem-_solving_.

In terms of financial survival, the kind of honesty for which Freire seems to advocate would be suicidal for a private, non-profit organization at the U.S. grassroots. Not only for the reasons stated, but also because, by definition, these institutions are considered to be "academically" inferior and having very little chance of developing a program of excellence.

This has created problems among the programs themselves, as there is very little inclination to share "what is really happening" with outsiders:[29]

> Sharing the process is one thing; sharing the results is quite another. We are living in the United States... Here people keep two sets of books. We all do that. I think the most important reason to do an evaluation is to ultimately improve the interactions between all the participants in a program, to share in the process of growth. It can be enormously valuable for one project to know what processes have been used in other projects in their evaluations; it can be helpful to know what problems other projects have run into in developing their process. It is my opinion that it is LESS useful to know the results. Each project is unique; each project has its own specific goals, its own structure.
>
> If an evaluation is done with the intent of sharing the results with outside groups, given the society in which we now live, the results will probably be less honest, and therefore less useful.

The above is a representative statement of what members of liberating education projects expressed in personal sessions throughout our collective interaction between 1978 and 1984.

Contrast the "someone-out-there-is-watching-us" attitude, which is evident in the above statement, with what Freire considers to be an appropriate climate for evaluation:[30]

> The climate that characterizes our study meetings cannot be any other but of critical curiosity; that of a search in which we defy ourselves.

Freire's desirable climate was present in some liberating education projects, but only when there were no "outsiders." Informal evaluation seminars were held (the second of the two sets of books). But, for the most part, that was "inside" information and project people had to trust you before you could even get close to it.

Freire sees in evaluation a means to maintain political clarity, because it facilitates the development of a coherence between educational practices and "the project of a new society."[31] This was written for Guinea-Bissau, where Freire believed there was a government-sponsored project for a new society. In the United States, as Tom Heaney has stated, we do not quite have a project yet: what we have is "a vision being formed." If this is the case, the goal of political clarity and of coherence between educational practices and the political goal is almost unattainable.

The format or structure most frequently mentioned by Freire for conducting an evaluation is the seminar:[32]

> Evaluation seminars (...) confirm, deepen or correct the visions of some of the points which were already discussed in a meeting during which we prepared for the practice.

Freire advises to hold "permanent evaluation seminars" in which all meet to share in the evaluation, re-enforcing accomplishments and discarding what are identified as errors."[33] He also recommends the use of recorders to tape group discussions. In his opinion, tapes would constitute an important collection of documents both to analyze the development of the work being conducted, and to be used in evaluation seminars by different (other) groups.[34]

In the Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire briefly describes evaluation seminars conducted by a working team engaged in preparations for a literacy program. After investigating the target community, the team would meet as a way to "decode" the reality that the team members had aprehended. It was a means for integrating the bits and pieces of the segmented reality each team member saw and, thus, an action that would result in a new analysis of the global (coherently integrated) situation of the community, pointing out the identified primary and secondary contradictions which affected community residents.[35] Yet, Freire does not hold his particular evaluation preferences as the only way:[36]

> It is possible, however, that you may be already utilizing or thinking to utilize a different evaluation method. That is not important. (My emphasis.)
>
> What is essential is, first, that a permanent evaluation be made on the work being conducted and, second, that evaluation never be considered as a means to prosecute (or criticize in a negative way).

In the above quote Freire apparently means that the selected method for evaluation is not important. If, in fact, that is his meaning, I strongly disagree. Methods, like facts, do not stand by themselves. They are based upon political preferences, an epistemology and an ontology (theory) that, if different from those of who are being evaluated, may fail to understand what is being evaluated. In the land of "surnamed" evaluations, one must choose very carefully which method to adopt, within those accepted by the "authorities" upon which the financial lives of our programs depend. In fact, some evaluation methods may force an institution to move along directions that ultimately can destroy what it was all about when it started.[37]

The simple, informal, defyingly honest evaluation Freire advocates for is simply not relevant for the evaluation "trap" we face in the United States. It may be considered useful in the "internal" activities of a program or institution, if and when there is a guarantee that results will not be made public. The premise upon which liberating programs operate is "out there, no one understands what we are doing." It may be mistaken, but the premise is there and cannot be denied.

"In there," as opposed to "out there," we thought we knew what we were doing. But we did not. Our assumptions were wrong: the theory of Paulo Freire was *not* transferable from the context of northeast Brazil to the "inner Third World" of the United States. What in effect we tried to do was to push Freire's theory to its outer limits, and when we reached the outer limits, Freire was not there anymore. We cannot blame Paulo Freire for this. It was our own doing. We *needed* to believe in something to fight our own apathy and alienation in the United States, and perhaps to confront "the old class" with a theory we arrogantly thought it could not understand. This was to give us some time to realign our forces after the noisy sixties.

We became immersed, as members of the cultural new class (Anglos and minorities alike) in the transformational movement and failed to see that, despite similarities, it may be quite different from the theory formulated by Freire.

We underestimated the power of the old class, not only to understand, but also to coopt our work. We took its money to work against it, and were most effectively neutered. We did not even realize it until it was too late. A good political lesson from which we *have* to learn if we are to begin anew. But in order to do this, we also need to examine the lessons that can be drawn from Freire's experiences in Guinea-Bissau.

Notes to Section 6: Evaluation and Transformation

1. The basic labels are "qualitative" and "quantitative," within which all others are categorized. The qualitative/quantitative dichotomy has produced an extensive bibliography. For an introduction, see Ray C. Rist's "Overview" in Workshops Exploring Qualitative/Quantitative Research Methodologies in Education (Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, July, 1976), Vol. I.

2. Gideon Sjoberg, "Politics, Ethics and Evaluation Research," in Marcia Guttentag and Elmer L. Struening (eds.) Handbook of Evaluation Research, Vol. 2 (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1975), p. 34.

3. For good sources on qualitative research see Robert Bodgan and Steven J. Taylor, Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods. A Phenomenological Approach to the Social Sciences (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1975). Also, see Michael Quinn Patton, Qualitative Evaluation Methods (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1980).

4. Paulo Freire, Pedagogía del Oprimido (Pedagogy of the Oppressed) (Montevideo: Tierra Nueva, 1970), pp. 182-83.

5. Michael Mathews, "Knowledge, Action and Power," in Mackie's Literacy and Revolution, pp. 82-92, has described the ontology of Paulo Freire as a "process ontology,"

6. Blue Series, Side 1.

7. For a general introduction to the subject, the following two books are excellent: Fritjof Capra, The Turning Point. Science, Society and the Rising Culture (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1982); and Marilyn Ferguson, The Aquarian Conspiracy. Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980's (Los Angeles: J.P. Torcher, 1980), specifically Chapter 6, "Liberating Knowledge: News from the Frontiers of Science," pp. 145-87, and Chapter 7, "Right Power," pp. 189-240.

8. For a very good explanation of the phenomenon of networking see Jessica Lipnack and Jeffrey Stamps, Networking: The First Report and Directory. People Connecting with People, Linking Ideas and Resources (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1982), specifically Chapter 1, "Discovering Another America," pp. 1-9.

9. Among them, Jerry Rubin. See Ferguson, Aquarian Conspiracy, p. 206.

10. Ferguson, Aquarian Conspiracy, p. 192.

11. Ibid., p. 202. The ideal is very non-directive, as evidenced in this quote.

12. Ferguson, Aquarian Conspiracy, p. 205.

13. Ibid., p. 207.

14. Ibid., p. 213.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., p. 215.

17. Ibid., p. 218.

18. Ibid., p. 222.

19. Ibid., p. 225.

20. Ibid., p. 229.

21. Capra, The Turning Point, p. 419.

22. Ibid., p. 418. It is interesting to note that in this point Ferguson and Capra disagree. According to Ferguson, "Because political parties are precisely the kind of conventional structure that is not working well, it seems unlikely that any will emerge from the... social movements now afoot. The energy expended to launch a new party and field candidates against entrenched parties would divert energy from enterprises with a better pay-off," Aquarian Conspiracy, p. 221. Ferguson has more faith in the possibility of transformed individuals being elected to key positions and transforming them from within: "in every corner of government, human beings conspire for change" (p. 235). She further trusts that federal funding will give "legitimacy" to the movement!

23. Illich, History of Needs, p. 66.

24. Paulo Freire, Cartas a Guinea-Bissau. Apuntes de una experiencia pedagógica en proceso (México: Siglo XXI, 1977). (Hereinafter referred to as "Letters,") p. 174.

25. "Political" in this context means the web of ideas and explanations (ideology) used by the ruling groups and those who dispute their power in order to interpret and to describe reality: the ruling groups, to sustain the status quo; the others to bring it down or to transform it. Ideology, as a synonym of political, is a much used and abused term which is coming to mean "the thought of my oponent." Fernand Dumont, Las Ideologías (Buenos Aires: El Ateneo, 1978), p. x. The meaning of ideology and its role in the politics of "who gets what, when and how" (a definition that some would describe as an ideology), is a very complex subject much debated in progressive circles. In the debate, the distinction between theory, science,

ideology and politics becomes more and more blurred. "Today, the debate about the concept of ideology is at an impasse. The dogmatists believe that science can be freed right now from all ideology. The hypercritics believe that knowledge is only raw appearance, and that so-called science is merely the ideology of this society." Henri Lefevre, The Survival of Capitalism. Reproduction of the Relations of Production (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), p. 68. See note 15 in Section 2. Political, in the U.S. power structure, is deemed (preached as) separate from the role of education, in which the ideological control of the ruling class is not admitted as such, but as "the truth." If the truth is questioned, those who question it are accused of being subversive (as indeed they are). However, the semantic reaction to subversive in the United States equates the word to "Communist," and "anti-American." Herein lies the problem. The objective of an educational program in the United States cannot be stated as "political" because this is meant by the system to be understood as "pertaining to party politics" and/or "being Communist," neither of which is accepted as the "proper" role of education in the United States.

26. "Formation" in Freire refers to a long process of personal and collective development which uses the "correct" way of knowing: acting for transformation, reflecting upon the action as a means to act again, and so on. "Training" refers to the acquisition of skills and "static" knowledge within a short period of time, in a mechanical way devoid of introspection or reflection (critical thought). Formation is political in the sense of "correct" politics; training is equated to domination, in Freire's thought. This created serious problems for practitioners seeking to "train" Freirian educators. See Phyllis Noble, Formation of Freirian Facilitators (IRCEL Product #1), Chicago, Latino Institute, 1983.

27. Freire, Letters, p. 132.

28. Ibid., p. 42.

29. "Some Thoughts on Evaluation," submitted informally by a member of the network in March, 1982.

30. Freire, Letters, p. 108.

31. Ibid., p. 137.

32. Ibid., p. 33.

33. Ibid., p. 41.

34. Ibid., p. 132.

35. Freire, Pedagogía, p. 140.

36. Freire, Letters, p. 132.

37. Specifically, methods aimed at determining quantitative elements within which quantitative "growth" is considered to be an indicator of success. An institution caught in this trap strives "to increase the number of" (graduates, illiterates made literate; applications for admissions; enrollment, etc.), and does not consider the impact of growth upon its institutional objective of "participatory democracy." A participatory meeting of 200 persons must be conducted in a manner quite different from a meeting in which only 20 persons must participate. Further, growth usually means more staff and perhaps a bureaucratic structure (or the burning out of a workaholic small staff which tries to cover all the bases); not to mention the need for an increase in incomes, for which funding agencies do not provide. Staff members have to use a special person who will work full time as fund-raiser or assign this task to a person already overburdened by administrative duties. In any case, the work of this person will separate her/him from the rest, creating communication problems in the institution. As a result, the jobs of fund-raisers and administrators are not understood and are often despised in liberating education programs.

Section 7

THE LESSONS OF GUINEA-BISSAU

Pedagogy in Process: The Letters to Guinea-Bissau is, among Freire's most recent books, the only available in the English language/ For purposes of analysis we can divide the book into two major sections: (1) reflections by Freire, intended for the reader of the book, and (2) the text of some letters written by Paulo Freire to Mario Cabral, State Commissioner of Education and Culture in Guinea-Bissau, and to the team that within Guinea-Bissau was trying to use Freire's ideas and procedures to develop a national literacy campaign. The letters themselves comprise approximately 45 percent of the book (certainly less than half of it, at least in its Spanish version, which is the one I have used). What is written directly for the reader is intended by Freire to be a "letter-report, a letter as informal as the rest of the letters which integrate the book." Freire does not seem to realize that the letter he addresses to the readers comprises the largest portion of the book itself.

Many colleagues engaged in liberating education in the United States have told me, in a confession-like manner, that they have not read the entire book. When I asked why the reasons were that it was "too slow," "too boring," and so on. Yet, there are phrases in the book that are recited frequently by U.S. practitioners, mainly the following:[1]

> In truth, experiences are not transplanted; instead they are re-invented.

Perhaps this is the statement found most meaningful by U.S. practitioners. It justifies all efforts at re-invention. The book offers no guidelines as to how an experience is re-invented. Therefore, everyone can say "I am re-inventing Freire's practice."

I made several critical readings of the book in question without any supplementary bibliography about Guinea-Bissau. Afterwards, I turned to supplementary readings. I was taken by surprise by facts which I deem extremely important to bear in mind before considering any educational endeavor in Guinea-Bissau, and needless to say, to make a critical reading of Freire's book. Some of these facts were provided by IDAC[2] one year before the first Spanish edition of Freire's book became available. These facts, as stated by IDAC, are:[3]

- The lives of 90% of the population of Guinea-Bissau revolve around a piece of fertile land where the main crop is rice. Agriculture is not just the foundation of Guinean economy, it is the entire Guinean economy.

- The population (at that time) was 800,000 inhabitants "in an area smaller than Switzerland." [By way of comparison, I would add that Puerto Rico is several times smaller than Guinea-Bissau and is populated by more than 3 million inhabitants.]

- This population was made up of more than 20 different "peoples" or "ethnic groups."

- Diversity is flagrant in all areas—from skin color to the shapes of houses, from language to religion from clothing to diet, from agricultural tools to marriage rules, from the division of labor to the distribution of wealth.

- Religious diversity: Moslems and Animists coexist with a few Christians (my emphasis).

- Language diversity: More than 20 "ethnic" languages are to be found, and yet another lingua franca is being developed, Creole, a sort of Africanized Portuguese enriched with the contributions of regional languages.

- Important segments of the diverse ethnic population:

  a) Balantes - major rice producers, living without a state of hierarchy in a horizontal and egalitarian society where each family works the land which has always been the village's community property.

  b) Fulas - a population segment with a well-defined hierarchy based on the authority of the chiefs, who live off the work of the peasants and women.

"It is," says IDAC, "on the basis of such a complex reality, with all its richness and its shortcomings, that the PAIGC (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde), together with the people, is building a nation."[4]

I would ask those readers who are interested, to read Freire's book *again* and test my contention that none of the above "facts" and/or complexity is evident in the book. Perhaps you will be as shocked and amazed as I was. You may rightfully ask why. I certainly did.

Although the evolution of Freire's thought over the seventies has not been studied in depth, we have all assumed that he has been taking an increasingly Marxist, radical, stand. Due to this, I could not understand how anyone that uses Marx's writings—even if only as an analytic tool—can possibly omit the existence of so radically complex material realities when describing a pedagogical process. Freire did not offer us, the readers, an analysis of the conditions of Guinea-Bissau in which he was intervening. Why? Was this not considered an important perspective for the reader? How could we grasp the *context* without this information? Or, stated differently, what kind of context were we to assume?

Both Freire and IDAC state that the government of Guinea-Bissau, in the person of Mario Cabral, in the Spring of 1975, invited him and the IDAC team "to visit Guinea and participate in the development of the national adult literacy program."[5] A reaction of enthusiasm and apprehension to the invitation is stated and a reaction of surprise is *implied*. In the Spanish version it is stated: "we received, in the spring of last year (1975) *the* official invitation..."[6] (My emphasis.) A careful reading makes the reader wonder about the grammatical use of "*the*" instead of "*an*" official invitation.

No explanation is offered as to *how* the invitation came about; nor as to the initial, not "official" events that led to the invitation. Linda Harasim provides a different view:[7]

> Paulo Freire and his team of educators from the Institute of Cultural Action (IDAC) in Geneva had offered both financial support and pedagogical assistance for the adult literacy activities. (p. 5, my emphasis.)
>
> In January, 1975, Freire made contact with the Ministry of Education in Guinea-Bissau, expressing interest in the literacy activities being developed in Guinea-Bissau and offering technical and financial assistance for such work. (...) By May of that year the offer was accepted. (p. 195)

It seems Freire made an offer that the government, anxious to create a nation and having scarce economic resources, was not in a position to reject.[8] This is very important because it could be that Freire and the IDAC team "invited themselves," so to speak. If so, "the" official letter of invitation received by Freire and IDAC, may have been a letter of acceptance in the form of an official letter of invitation.

Why invite themselves? Linda states:[9]

> Guinea-Bissau represented an opportunity for Freire and the IDAC team to implement the Freire method of literacy in a revolutionary, Third World country. The experiment in Brazil had been limited to relatively small experiments. The Chilean experience had not significantly reduced the rate of illiteracy. Moreover, since the 1970's Freire had also been confronted by problems in his theory of conscientization for changing social structures and conditions of oppression. In the mid-70's he wrote (...) that as long as the structures of a society do not change, the education system will not change in any radical way, beyond offering reforms which still contribute to maintaining the existing oppressive structures. (...) Guinea-Bissau represented such a revolutionary Third World context, where his theory of literacy could serve national reconstruction. Moreover, through his work in Guinea-Bissau, Freire also implicitly contributes to the image that his literacy method has universal validity and appropriateness to the Third World.

I have quoted Harasim in length because her work—a doctoral dissertation—is the only such document which examines in a direct way the work of Paulo Freire. By direct I mean not only an examination of relevant literature, but also "two field visits to Guinea-Bissau to collect primary and secondary data: in June and July, 1980 and from September 1980 to March 1981."[10] According to Linda, she directly interviewed the major actors in the studied events, including Paulo Freire. She also conducted research in the government archives of Guinea-Bissau for the five-year period 1976-80; made visits to the interior of Guinea-Bissau; observed and recorded literacy classes. Her having lived and worked in the interior of the country for seven months (including the coup d'etat in November, 1980), is an additional experience that inclines me to consider very seriously Linda's findings and conclusions.

Linda concentrated on the subject of literacy, which is only tangentially relevant to the work U.S. practitioners conducted based upon Freire's educational philosophy. Yet, as it is such educational philosophy what was behind Freire's work in Guinea-Bissau, Linda also examines the thought of Paulo Freire. An analysis of the results obtained by Freire in Guinea-Bissau is relevant to us because of this reason. That is why I will try to summarize the highlights of Linda's conclusions in this section.

Among Linda's findings is the fact that in 1980, the Department of Adult Education of Guinea-Bissau declared the following:[11]

> We could say that literacy in the years 1976 to '79 involved 26,000 students and the results were practically nil.

The statement has serious implications. First, as stated by Linda:[12]

> This failure was unexpected and raises many questions for educators both in Guinea-Bissau and internationally, because the context [post-revolutionary] and the methodology [Freire's] of the literacy work had created expectations of success.

More important for our work in the United States: How many of us knew that Freire's practice in Guinea-Bissau was declared a failure in 1980? Why has not Freire discussed this very important matter with his different audiences in Puerto Rico and the United States? I deem it essential to summarize what Linda Harasim considers to be elements which led to the failure of Freire's literacy campaign during the national reconstruction of Guinea-Bissau after the country obtained its independence.

Overall, Linda sees Freire as having an idealist and populist ideology that led him to romanticize Guinea-Bissau and its people. The political economy of the country, its historical and cultural traditions—including language—were not much taken into consideration by Freire in the design and implementation of the literacy campaign.

The literacy campaign was conducted *in Portuguese*[13] which not only is the language of the colonial power and the élite, but also a language spoken *by only 5% of Guinea-Bissau's entire population*, "who are all literate." The main languages of Guinea-Bissau and the percentage of the population that speaks these are described by Linda as follows:[14]

Balante	--	26%
Fula	--	23%
Mandingo	--	12%
Manjaro	--	10.6%
Creole	--	45%

Creole is usually spoken as a second language to any of the above.

These are *all oral* languages dominant in all rural areas and were not available in any written form during the campaign. Guinea-Bissau had no literate tradition and this created a serious problem: a lack of motivation. Peasants saw no *need* for literacy nor did they have any economic motivation to learn to read and write.

The economy of the country was based upon subsistence agriculture—a pre-capitalist mode of production in Marx's theory. The country had an "underdeveloped" technology. Moreover, its ethnic groups (more than thirty, according to Harasim) not only were very different, but also lived in isolation from each other.[15] Peasants, the majority of the population, had

had little contact with the colonizers and had not experienced direct exploitation. Thus, they had little awareness of the colonizers as an oppressive force.[16] This was stated by Amílcar Cabral during the sixties.[17] Yet, Amílcar believed (or stated) that the war and the deliberate efforts of the revolutionary armed forces had successfully ameliorated tribal differences, and these were not considered by him to be a major problem.[18] Freire stated that in his studies about Guinea-Bissau he gave special importance to the writings of Amílcar Cabral. I must insist that Freire seems to take at face value the writings of revolutionaries, not giving a thought to what Alinsky established as *Rules*.

In the midst of a war a revolutionary leader (no matter how "authentic") just cannot afford to increase the enemy's strength by an admission of weaknesses of revolutionaries in the cause of national liberation. I wonder if this fact was one of the elements which misled Freire in his understanding of Guinea-Bissau.

On the other hand, Amílcar Cabral did analyze class stratification in Guinea-Bissau. He described the various ethnic groups and their different modes of production, religious attitudes and even the role of women in each population segment. He anticipated problems during the national reconstruction stage after immediate independence, focussing these problems on the role of the petty burgeoisie before and after independence.[19] The role of the burgeoisie is the only "class" aspect which Freire mentions in his book.

Upon independence, Guinea-Bissau had no national identity as understood by the industrial West: culture, language, centralized market economy, or political consciousness. Yet, Freire strongly believed that a national consciousness *was* present in Guinea-Bissau. It did not have an infrastructure to allow for travel to and communications with the interior of the country with any regularity. The minimum qualified person-power required to take on the many complex duties of creating a state machinery for the planning, coordination and implementation of a project for a new society in a country devastated by war was simply not available. During the entire four centuries of Portuguese domination, the number of university graduates among the population of Guinea-Bissau was less than 15 persons.[20]

In short, Linda Harasim states that Freire did precisely what in his book on the subject he stated should not be done: he assumed that he understood more than he did and transferred his method from one Third World country to another.[21] Freire did not consider that the economic underdevelopment of Guinea-Bissau and the conditions we have briefly described would create a context completely different from that in which he developed his theory and practice; a context in which his literacy method and ideas simply could not work.

What I deem fascinating in Harasim's analysis is that she pinpoints ideas behind Freire's practice in Guinea-Bissau that are very similar to those described by Pereira Paiva regarding Freire's intellectual formation in Brazil in the late fifties: an idealist-populist ideology; the impact of Christian existentialism (from which emerges Freire's concern with "authenticity" and intersubjectivity); the concern to prepare "the masses" for democracy through a process of educating consciousness for liberation[22] and his Christian ethics in which the petty burgeoisie commits class suicide in solidarity with the oppressed in a sort of:[23]

> Mystical transformation of hitherto very materially determined beings, the leadership class, by an act of sheer moral and religious will.

Ultimately, Harasim asserts, Freire acts as if class struggle could be "neutralized by spiritual will."[24]

I have already discussed how many of us ignore what Harasim calls "the objective class interests of the leadership, educators and learners." Harasim points out that Freire also ignored this aspect (the class roots of consciousness). In her opinion, which at the outset she states is based upon historial materialism, "the proletarianization of the petty burgeoisie is the result of material, economic factors rather than of moral conversion."[25]

Some of Freire's major misconceptions about the country he was working with, in Harasim's view, were: (1) the belief that Guineans had been oppressed by inclusion in colonial schools, and (2) the belief that Guineans were politically literate.[26] The latter is based on Freire's stated view that the war of liberation politicized the population. Freire does not offer us any indication as to the evidence upon which he based that conclusion.

On the "pedagogical" aspects of Freire's failure in Guinea-Bissau, Harasim found that Freire did not offer practical, concrete advice for the areas of training, curriculum development and evaluation.[27]

> The activities envisioned and eventually implemented were inappropriate, unrealistic, and beyond the capacities of the country... [A particular] strategy was more concerned with orchestrating the "class suicide" of the animators [literacy teachers] than with such concrete tasks as teaching the population to read and write. There were simply not enough literates in the country to go out to live in a village for two years in order to achieve class suicide.

Freire had to know that Guinea-Bissau did not have the qualified personnel needed for the role of "animator" (literacy teacher or "facilitator" as the role is called in the United States). We have seen that not offering practical advice seems to be "standard procedure" of Freire, at least in his dialogues with practitioners of his ideas in the United States. However, in Guinea-Bissau he was to a great extent directing the literacy operation. His fame and prestige probably had a great deal of influence in a country plagued by thousands of problems for national reconstruction, among which a 99 percent illiteracy rate would inescapably be a major obstacle. If in the United States Freire has been considered almost an oracle—we can imagine how he would be heard in Guinea-Bissau. If in the United States we have found it extremely difficult to find and train (form) this type of staff, we can well imagine what the situation would be in a society overwhelmingly integrated by an illiterate, technically underdeveloped and linguistically-divided peasantry.

According to Harasim, the responsibilities assigned to the animators in Guinea-Bissau "were massive," including:[28]

- Political mobilization
- Health and preventive medicine
- Agriculture and community development
- Literacy work.

Volunteers for this work "came from the primary and secondary schools" (mostly urban and almost untouched by the war). They were hard to find and among those who did volunteer there was a high drop-out rate. Harasim believes that:[29]

> Freire's conceptualization of a literacy animator was beyond the capacities of anyone who was available. (My emphasis.)

What kind of training or assistance was provided to these volunteers? The Department of Adult Education in Guinea-Bissau summarized the results of the training provided to animators as follows:[30]

> The program content of the training program was simply too vast, (...) it reflected a lack of linking theory with practice, and there was no real linking of literacy with the socio-economic development of the country.

By way of illustration, although Guinea-Bissau's economy is described everywhere as overwhelmingly agricultural, "Mario Cabral had to point out to the literacy team that they had forgotten to mention agriculture in the draft of the first [literacy] manual and that, given the importance of agriculture to the people and economy of Guinea-Bissau, they should do so."[31] (My emphasis.)

This, by itself, gives me the impression that the work being conducted —Freire's statements to the contrary notwithstanding—was almost alienated from the context for which it was intended.

An overall view of the educational materials used was provided as follows:[32]

> [The materials] were not always written in a language accessible to the reader and many times the form of presentation of the content was too theoretical and difficult to understand.

Harasim strongly criticizes Freire for considering all sorts of problems as essentially "political." For Freire, problems are the result "of an incorrect attitude and wrong political stance on the part of the educator."[33] This reminds me of his evaluation of the Cuban presence in Africa: the important thing was the *attitude* with which Cubans went to Africa. Attitudes may be important, but surely not everything can be reduced to "incorrect attitude and wrong political stance." For instance, Linda mentions very serious practical problems she encountered during her research. The lack of a duplicating (photocopy) machine which left her no option but to transcribe by hand many government documents; lack of transportation to go to the interior of the country, and so on. We have no reason to believe that animators did not face many such practical, irritating problems; problems that obstruct and delay any previous plans that do not take material conditions into consideration.

Let us not forget that we are referring to animators with little formal schooling—not the Christian university students in Brazil, or the university graduate Latinos and other faculty members in U.S. universities. If we had problems translating Freire's ideas into action, we have no reason to think that Guineans found it any easier.

Lack of practical advice from Freire to U.S. practitioners can be understood and even justified. The conditions of Guinea-Bissau do not warrant such a justification. Freire has always insisted on acting upon reflection about local conditions as a basis for further action.

Pedagogy is political, but not *only* political. It seems that little (if any) attention was given by Freire to the total unfamiliarity of the

Guinean animators with what could be called the art and/or science of teaching, and, within, to the development of oral, visual and manual skills; different learning styles, and psychological factors that facilitate or impede learning.[34] A considerable number of specific and very concrete errors in the Freire-directed program in Guinea-Bissau identified by the government itself is presented and analyzed by Harasim. I have only touched upon the surface of her work because my subject is not literacy.

My purpose in highlighting Linda Harasim's doctoral dissertation is to encourage a discussion on the extent to which Freire's ideas can be translated into a coherent, successful practice, by looking at how Freire himself did it in a Third World country. Granted that he attempted to work within most difficult material conditions. However, he had the government fully behind him—which practitioners in the United States do not have—and plenty of information about the conditions of the country in which, Freire thought, he was not a stranger.

I believe that Freire was misled by an attempt—perhaps unconscious—to force a reality to "fit" his pre-formulated theory. As all of us, he selected or perceived from the reality he worked with only those elements that seemed to support his theory. The contradictions in his theory—shared to a great extent by Amílcar Cabral and the PAIGC—led them all astray and prevented them from comprehending the totality of the country. Ambiguous objectives with no concrete priorities (to politicize, to teach to read and write) in a desperate, chaotic and disorganized need to create a national government without a nation, probably needed more central authority than either Freire or the PAIGC were prepared to allow. Independence does not, in any conceivably way, erase class conflicts and vested interests in a population. Amílcar Cabral himself said it time and time again before he was murdered in 1973. According to Linda Harasim, soon after the independence of Guinea-Bissau, "the bureaucratic petty burgeoisie and the pro-industrialist socialist sectors," developed an alliance to give priority to urban-industrial development, practically abandoning the needs of peasants and ignoring the country's mode of production.[35] The

Party, according to Ziegler, wanted the development of an essentially agricultural society that would be self-sufficient to cover the basic needs of the population.[36] As of 1978, Ziegler asked whether Guinea-Bissau would be capable of avoiding "frenetic industrialization, the intensive exploitation of the country's mineral resources and the rigid entrance of the country to a world market almost totally dominated by multinational societies and industrial states."[37]

By Harasim's account, it seems that the PAIGC was defeated in the priorities it had established. Frank Tenaille, offers us the following information:[38]

- Upon independence the PAIGC had 18,000 armed forces which insisted in "conserving their privileges." This was an elite of armed combatants who received political education and literacy during the struggle. After independence, the government slowly integrated them into the country's economic life by means of agricultural cooperatives.

- The PAIGC's early nationalism turned into a "more classical" nationalism, establishing a "state capitalism" under the direction of the Party, proclaiming itself as a "national revolutionary democracy."

- Nationalist reforms were initiated under an "anti-imperialist front" as a political programme, avoiding all references to class distinctions and social stratification.

- The PAIGC adopted directives of the petty burgeoisie of Bissau [the capital city] and norms of pacific co-existence at the international level.

- In August 1976, a general report prepared by Arístides Pereira, General Secretary, warned about the risk of "rightist deviations" that the Party should prevent by insuring command over key positions.

- In March 1977, Luis Cabral was re-elected President of the State Council for a 4-year period.

- In November 14, 1980, one of the most active military chiefs during the struggle for national liberation conducted a successful coup against Luis Cabral.

Tenaille asserts that the coup was well-received by the population and that the reasons which brought it about were:[39]

- A worsening of the economic situation—rice, the basic staple, was practically unavailable in the urban centers.
- A constitutional project that would have given the defeated president broader powers than he had.
- The wish of the Black population to assert its dominance in the balance of power.

As of the time in which he writes, Tenaille describes the structure of the state in Guinea-Bissau as based upon the regional decentralization policies established during the war. At the economic level, he reports that Guinea-Bissau reached agreements with France, Rumania and Sweden for the mineral extraction of bauxite; agreements with Argelia for importing wood; and with China for the development of the rice crop.

Before the coup, Denis Goulet described Guinea-Bissau's economy as one in which "incompatible multiple sectors" coexisted.[40] The PAIGC, according to Goulet, "left much of the economy as it had been" before independence, because it "lacked enough competent people to run all the economic units on which the country depended."[41]

I do not have information as to the extent to which the coup may have brought about stronger defenses against the penetration of multinational corporations and neo-colonialism in Guinea-Bissau. What seems evident, though, is that at the time which Freire worked with Guineans, the country was far from being economically independent, and that a power struggle was being waged within the élite to determine the future of the country's economy.

The picture that emerges from a variety of sources is very different from the one that can be gleaned from Freire's book about his work in Guinea-Bissau. Reading the book in the light of this new information is sufficient to prove the point beyond any doubt.

Guinea-Bissau is one more instance in which our uncritical acceptance has led us astray. What the experience means within the United States context must be thoroughly discussed and analyzed by practitioners of Freire's ideas. As stated by a friend in the network: "If Freire's theory didn't work in Guinea-Bissau, does that mean the theory can't work; that it is irrelevant? Did his ideas not work because of his personal, 'contradictory' behavior, or because his ideas don't work? How are his ideas and his personal behavior related?" These are questions for the readers to answer.

Notes to Section 7: The Lessons of Guinea-Bissau

1. Freire, *Letters*, pp. 16-17.

2. Rosiska Darcy de Oliveira and Miguel Darcy de Oliveira, *Guinea-Bissau: Reinventing Education* (IDAC Monograph No. 11-12, Geneva, Spring 1976).

3. *Ibid*., p. 10.

4. *Ibid*.

5. *Ibid*., p. 5.

6. *Ibid*., p. 13.

7. Harasim, *Literacy and National Reconstruction*.

8. IDAC's monograph on Guinea-Bissau states: "The IDAC involvement in Guinea-Bissau was made possible financially by a grant from the Commission of the Churches' Participation in Development (CCPA) of the World Council of Churches." (p. 51).

9. Harasim, *Literacy and National Reconstruction*, pp. 196-97. Linda Harasim raises the issue that Freire's work in Brazil and Chile may not have been as successful as the literature on the subject presented it to be. I have never seen an evaluation of Freire's fieldwork; only glowing statements of success are available in bibliographic resources. Quoting Farideh Mashayekh, "Freire—the Man, his Ideas and their Implications," in *Literacy Discussion* (Spring, 1974), Linda reminds us: "available documents and data on the results achieved during this experiment [in Brazil are far from enabling us to evaluate the effectiveness of this method in either the *cognitive* or the *affective* domain... The Chilean experiment, like that of Brazil, did not provide adequate quantitative data allowing systematic evaluation of the method's impact. In spite of the relatively low rate of illiteracy in Chile (11.7%) and government support for literacy programs through 'conscientization,' the problems of drop-out among the participants has not been solved."

   In this quote Mashayekh uses evaluation concepts and criteria which may be inadequate for understanding liberating education. However, the fact stands that evaluation reports (of any kind) on Freire's experiences are lacking.

10. *Ibid*., p. 20.

11. *Ibid*., p. 6. This statement was taken from a government document dated at Bissau, November 8, 1980. A military coup took place on

November 14, 1980. Frank Tenaille, Las 56 Africas (México: Siglo XXI, 1981), p. 134.

12. Harasim, Literacy and National Reconstruction, p. 6.

13. The reader should not simplify or underestimate the language problem in the literacy campaign of Guinea-Bissau. Amílcar Cabral, leader of the struggle for independence, favored the adoption of Portuguese "as a vehicle for socio-economic and political advancement and for international communication," Amílcar Cabral, Revolution, p. 176. Cabral understood that, though Creole was a transethnic language that should eventually be used in education, it was first necessary to have it grammatically systematized and transcribed into an alphabetical and written form (Ibid, p. 179), not an easy task to be rapidly accomplished. In a recent article by Donaldo P. Macedo, "The Politics of an Emancipatory Literacy in Cape Verde," Journal of Education, 165:1 (Winter, 1983), pp. 99-212, the author states that Freire "failed to completely convince the Capeverdean leaders and educators of the importance of their native language in the development of an emancipatory literacy." He further states that in a personal interview, Freire "deplored" the policy of using Portuguese as a vehicle for literacy (p. 110). The quotes refer to Cape Verde. Did Freire also try to persuade the leaders of Guinea-Bissau to use Creole instead of Portuguese? Or is this something he learned after the Guinea-Bissau experience? The matter is not as simple as a reading of Donaldo P. Macedo would seem to suggest.

14. Harasim, Literacy and National Reconstruction, p. 314.

15. Ibid., p. 314.

16. Ibid., p. 306.

17. "In Guinea the peasants cannot read or write, they had almost no relations with the colonial forces during the colonial period except for paying taxes, which is done indirectly." Cabral, Revolution, p. 69.

18. "We have had no great difficulties as far as tribalism is concerned. We did have trouble creating in our people a national awareness, and it is the struggle itself that is cementing that national awareness. But all the people in general, from whatever ethnic groups have been easily led to accept the idea that we are a people, a nation, (...) We also know that the vestiges of tribalism in our country have been eliminated through the armed struggle we are waging (...) Only political opportunists are tribalists." (Ibid., p. 145).

19. "Events have shown that the only social sector capable of being aware of the reality of imperialist domination and of directing the state apparatus inherited from this domination is the native petty burgeoisie

(...) the popular masses do not generally reach the necessary level of political consciousness before... national liberation." (Ibid., p. 108). Yet, Amílcar Cabral also warned: "The moment national liberation comes and the petty burgeoisie takes power, we enter, or rather return to history, and thus the internal contradictions break out again." (Ibid., p. 69).

20. Ibid, p. 143.

21. Harasim, Literacy and National Reconstruction, p. 366.

22. Ibid., p. 349.

23. Ibid., p. 352.

24. Ibid., p. 353.

25. Ibid., p. 354.

26. Ibid., p. 368.

27. Ibid., pp. 375-80.

28. Ibid., p. 369.

29. Ibid., p. 370.

30. Ibid., p. 372.

31. Ibid., p. 376.

32. Ibid., p. 372.

33. Ibid., p. 374.

34. Ibid., p. 375.

35. Ibid., p. 400.

36. Jean Ziegler, Saqueo en Africa (México: Siglo XXI, 1979), p. 199.

37. Ibid., p. 199.

38. Tenaille, 56 Africas, pp. 133-37.

39. Ibid., pp. 134-35.

40. Denis Goulet, Looking at Guinea-Bissau (Wash. D.C.: Overseas Development Council, 1978), p. 21.

41. Ibid.

Section 8

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

I started this work with the history of Paulo Freire, a human being who later on became internationally famous and, I believe, deformed, romanticized and perhaps misunderstood. I tried to understand and share the environment that nurtured Freire's ideas and practices in Brazil. This led me to produce a necessarily brief overview of Brazil's political, social and economic development between 1930-1964, and to explore the ideas (ideology?) that either originated from or produced (depending on your point of view) the development of Brazil and Freire's educational philosophy.

Paulo Freire was and is, like each of us, a human being ingrained in a specific historical epoch, a social class, a national context and an intellectual tradition, elements which may both form and deform us. After a careful reading of several sources and re-readings of Freire, I am persuaded that his context during the 1950's was that of developmental capitalist nationalism, within which he acted as a liberal member of a Catholic intellectual élite. The context of the ideas first expressed by Freire has been presented in the first section and it does not sustain the vision of a "revolutionary" Paulo Freire as per the Marxist "Third World" formulations that we have seen in the sixties and seventies. Yet, I believe, that is how we saw Freire when we adopted his ideas.

In the second section, I turn towards the many ways in which Freire has been—and is—read, understood (misunderstood?) and perceived in the United States. I try to identify the factors that constitute obstacles to the comprehension of Freire's ideas and practices; obstacles that are both of a practical and philosophical nature, and which have a lot to do with the fact that U.S. intellectuals—natives or residents—are formed in an environment which is quite different from that of a middle-class intellectual who is born and raised in a Latin American country (in this case, Brazil). I conclude that the urgency to understand a romanticized Freire in order to act "radically" within the United States through the deliberate adoption of what was considered a "Third World revolutionary approach," led many educators to the creation of "Freire-inspired programs" in a spontaneous and uncritical way.

In Section Three, I first try to describe the type of persons who integrated the "we" to which I refer in Section Two. I offer a summary of the way in which we saw ourselves and what we believed to be our motivations. Then I make a 180 degree turn to declare that "we" never confronted or critically examined who we are and what motivated us within a non-idealist framework. To provide a sense of balance, I examine the issues in question from a materialist perspective, and with perspectives of those who have criticized "educational radicals" in the United States. I then present Alvin Gouldner, an author of a theory that makes quite a great deal of sense to me, and which offers an alternative means for all to explore who we are, where do we come from, and where do we want to go.

The fourth section is aimed at describing the basis of the activities conducted in the United States by some practitioners of Freire's ideas (mostly Latinos), as I perceived those activities between 1978-1983. At the middle of the section, I introduce the fact that, during 1980-1982, a federally-funded project emerged within which "we" tried to work together, and what resulted from it. It may seem that I inverted the chronology here, but it is not so, as the federally-funded stage came after we had worked in liberating education for several years.

Section Five offers a general account of specific problems encountered by practitioners of liberating education due to the fact that we work in the U.S. society. I refer to individual and institutional problems, both with the entrenched system and among ourselves. I summarize two non-Latino sources that I consider "a must" for understanding the practice of liberating education in the United States. I react to the sources that are summarized from a Latino perspective, both mine and the one I obtained from others while residing in the United States between 1980-1983. I point out the many ways in which we Latinos are (some by choice) isolated from the White progressive élites and question the extent to which the stated goals of liberating education are attainable for Latinos in the United States, given that we are not politically organized in any meaningful way.

In the sixth section, I discuss evaluation as a separate problem faced by liberating education practitioners in the system. Evaluation constitutes a problem because it is an activity required by external sources of funding in ways that practitioners do not consider adequate nor relevant; and because the type of evaluations which we would like to be free to conduct are not acceptable to the system. The problem, however, goes beyond the previous statement of facts. Evaluation, as education itself, is inseparable from ontology and epistemology, subjects seldom explored or discussed by practitioners (or by the educational system, for that matter), being considered too abstract to be practical. Ontology and epistemology may be whatever we make them to be, but one thing is for sure: we all act based upon an ontological and epistemological stand, often in contradictory ways. I conclude that Freire cannot help us in this problem because his own theoretical formulations on the subjects are contradictory. Adopting Freire's positions without reflecting upon their contradictions only creates—as it has created—a great deal of confusion.

In the same section I introduce the hypothesis that U.S. progressives have gone beyond Freire and perhaps beyond the Third World in their denounciation of oppression and their announcements for "a better world." This I believe to be an impact of the "new physics," which have been disseminated in the United States by the mass paperback trade and have inspired a "transformational movement." This movement I believe to be a strategy of the Cultural New Class. There may very well be a dissonance between what U.S. progressives want and what the Third World wants. Should this be the case, evaluating the operationalization of a "Third World philosophy of education" within the United States under the assumption that U.S.

practitioners, many of whom are "into" the transformational movement are attuned to the Third World—either the one in or out of the United States—would be, at best, a quixotic venture. I do believe that transformational thought and practices in the United States have gone beyond Freire, and in many ways are contradictory to Freire's theory and practices, no matter how many superficial similarities can be identified. I conclude that our uncritical adoption of Freire's educational philosophy and the disparate ways in which it was uncritically mixed with transformational ideas and practices, U.S.-style, was a serious error for which only we are to blame. The United States context is simply too different from that in which Freire developed his ideas, and we have not really tried to explore the differences. It was easier to assume that the Third World was the same in any country.

The last section examines Freire's own practice in Guinea-Bissau as a means to explore what transpired when Freire's ideas and practices were used in a newly independent Third World country. The result which emerges is one of failure; a failure that Freire has never mentioned to the "we" I have referred to throughout this essay. A key issue is that Freire seems to have violated the very same principles he establishes in his writings as a guide for action. There are lessons in this for those of us who did the same in the United States. The issue must be raised on whether Freire's educational philosophy and practices are workable at all.

The concern has been privately expressed to me in personal letters over the past year, ranging from "Why hasn't Paulo discussed this with us?" to an overprotective insistence on keeping the matter between friends. I have opted to open up the subject as still another issue that must be explored by Freire practitioners in the United States.

Confusing the shoulds with the is may very well be a human trait. It is certainly tempting, as it plays upon our desire to believe in something that can be considered as "truth" beyond any reasonable doubt. Freire practitioners committed this mistake. Freire seems to have committed it too.

Any evaluation of Freire-inspired programs in the United States should consider the many unresolved issues I raise in this essay: who are we, where do we come from, what are we looking for, how sound is our approach based both in the writings of Freire and in the concrete context in which we work. Of course, this can be totally ignored in evaluations required by funding sources. It is sufficient to use one of the many "surnamed evaluations models" available, specifically the qualitative models. Any program can be thus evaluated and the "Freire-inspired" aspect can be ignored.

I ask for more honesty with ourselves. I think it is time for us to ask uncomfortable questions. The most important of these may be whether, in fact, after a decade of trying to practice Freire's educational philosophy, we should admit that it is *not* applicable to our work. It is in this context that the new information about Freire's formative period in Brazil and his work in Guinea-Bissau should be critically examined.

The idea is *not* to judge Paulo Freire. He has been an inspiration to us in moments when we were about to "give-up" in our quest for a more just and equitable society. If only for that reason—and there are more than one—*we owe him*. We owe him justice and respect. For me, this means being as critical of his ideas and practices as he taught us to be critical of ours. It is time that we do both. That is what I have tried to do.

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